

CHAPTER 4 - THE AMERSHAM MARTYRS.

The Seven Years' famine & the Black Death, in 1348, had left this area in a pitiful condition; people died like flies, & cattle roamed ownerless & harvests rotted in the fields. The result of all these horrors was to make the people receptive to the form of religious teaching introduced in to the town in 1382, when one of Wycliffe's 'evangelical men' was often in its long street, clad in russet gown, barefooted, with travelling staff in hand. He preached in the church, when allowed, or in the churchyard, & even the street & the wide market place were, on occasions, his pulpit.

From this time Amersham became an active centre of Lollardy. Sir Philip de la Vache, a local landowner, had married the daughter of Sir Lewis Clifford, a Lollard leader, while Sir Thomas Cheyne, of Chesham Bois with others was sympathetic. In 1414, many Amersham people attended a procession in St. Giles's Field, London, as a result of which we learn that William Turnour, Walter Yonge & John Hazelwode of Agmondesham, (Amersham) were, amongst others, sentenced & burnt to death for favouring 'certain' preachers 'against the King's person.' Thomas Cheyne, lord of the manor, Chesham Bois, was also implicated in this affair, & imprisoned in the Tower of London, & it is presumed that his estates were forfeited. Some of the tenants of Edmund Brudenell, lord of Raans were proceeded against for heresy in 1462, these being John Baron, Geoffrey Symeon, John Crane, & Robert Body. In 1506, the Amersham Lollards attracted the attention of Bishop William Smith of Lincoln, & from this time onward inquisitions are recorded as being held both in the town & at the Bishop's Palace, then at Wooburn, about 5 miles away. In this year William Tylsworth, or Tilesworth, was burnt at a stake in Stony-Prat or Stanley's Close, to the north of Amersham church; his only daughter, Joan Clark, a 'faithful woman' was compelled to set fire to the faggots with her own hand. Thomas Chase of Amersham was imprisoned in the Prison of 'Little Ease' at Wooburn, where 'it was impossible for him to stand upright, or to lie down with comfort' being loaded with chains, gyves, manacles & irons, & beaten, half starved & harassed with threats by the Bishop's Chaplains. He was finally taken out & strangled, and buried on the roadside. 'Father' Rogers, whose descendants were prominent Nonconformists in Amersham, was so cruelly treated in prison that 'he could never go upright as long as he lived.'

Thomas Man, locally known as 'Doctor' Man, came to reside at Amersham, & is said to have won over hundreds of people to Lollardy. He was burnt at Smithfield in 1518. At an inquisition held at Amersham in 1521, which was conducted by John Longland, the then Bishop of Lincoln, hundreds of local people were suspect, & the trials covered a period of months.

Thomas Bernard, James Morden, Robert Rave, John Scrivener, Thomas Holmes & Joan Norman were handed over to the secular power to be burned. Of these only the last named escaped death. Bishop Longland himself attended the burnings at Stanley's Close, Amersham, & preached a violent sermon.

Thomas Harding, an Amersham man, who went to live at Chesham, was burnt 'in a dell going to Botley' just outside the town, in 1532. He had been enjoined to do penance in 1506, & again in 1521, & was still wearing the green badge of the heretic at the time of his death.

A few years ago a Martyrs Memorial was erected on the supposed site of the burnings at Stanley's Close, Amersham. Dr. Kelke, writing many years ago, says 'On the land called Stanley's at the back of the Church and the Churchyard, popular tradition has assigned a spot where these victims to religious intolerance suffered & where the corn has been said often not

to flourish. The spot under the direction of the late Mr. Marshall, of Amersham, was some years ago dug up in order to ascertain the real cause of its barrenness. It was found to be full of flints which, being taken out, or partially removed, the ground has since borne better crops, but still showing a difference from the surrounding land during dry spells.'

The matter is also referred to in the Gentleman's Magazine of October 1811. It is recorded by Mr. E. West, a one time resident of Amersham, that the Rev. Joseph Burton, a retired West Indian Missionary, and the Pastor of the Lower Baptist Chapel at Amersham, employed a labouring man named Belch to dig up the soil. It was found that an old chalk pit had been filled up with large flints, thus accounting for the barrenness of the site. Belch died shortly after, & not a few looked upon his death as a Visitation of God!

VISIT OF JOHN KNOX.

John Knox, who was yet to play a very important part in the history of the Scottish Reformation, had in 1553 been appointed one of the King's Chaplains, but, on conscientious grounds refused several attractive livings. He was dismissed from office & by a minute of the Council dated 2nd. June, 1553, was sent on a preaching tour into Bucks. It is of interest to note that Sir Thomas Cheyne, son of the Lollard of Chesham Bois, was a member of the Council. Knox commenced his preaching tour in the vicinity of Chenies, & preached in Amersham Parish Church on Sunday, July 16th., 1553: on the eve of his return to London. Excitement ran high hereabouts for, with the enthronement of Lady Jane Grey, the people of Bucks were strongly in favour of Mary: & Knox foreseeing that the accession of Mary might mean an alliance with her uncle, Charles V. of Germany, and a deadly blow struck at the Protestant cause throughout Europe, preached accordingly, well knowing the grave personal risk to which he exposed himself. The scene on this Sunday was an impressive & solemn one; the church was crowded with people who had gathered from the town and country around to hear this great preacher: many in a spirit of opposition. The scene as Knox saw it is described by himself, where in his writings of two years later at Dieppe, he refers to it under a title "Admonition unto the Professors of God's Truth in England". He writes 'In wrytinge hereof of what was sayd in Hammershame, when uproure was for establyshing of Marye in authority, it came to mind that after the death of that innocent & moste godlye kynge, Edward the Sixte, whyle that great tumulte was in Englande for the establyshing of that most unhappye & wycked womane's authoritie (I mean of her that now raigneth in Godde's wrath), entreatinge the same argument in a towne in Buckinghamshyre, named Hammershame, before a great congregation, with sorrowful herte & wepyng eyes.' Despite the stirring appeal of Knox, we find the district still staunch for Mary, & Lady Jane sent troops into Bucks. to quell disturbances.

The outspoken words of Knox at Amersham, & his bold denunciation of the Emperor, resulted in his expulsion from the Imperial City of Frankfurt at a later date.

RECTORY - This is situate a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile N. of the church, & was bestowed by Geoffrey de Mandeville, first Earl of Essex, upon the Abbey of Walden, Essex as part of its original endowment. The present house was built c.1732, by the Rev. Benjamin Robertshaw, & contains some early 17th. century panelling probably taken from the former building. The well house in the garden, now disused, is timber framed with brick filling & is probably 17th. century.

CHAPTER 13 - THE PARISH OF CHESHAM BOIS.

THE MANOR - In the reign of King Edward, the manor, assessed at one and a half hides was held by two sokemen - one a man of Earl Leofwin, the other a man of Earl Harold. In the Domesday Survey (1086) the estates passed to the Bishop of Bayeux, & it is recorded that there was land for 3 ploughs & 1 plough maintained: 2 villeins & 3 bordars for 2 ploughs. There were two serfs, a Mill, worth 3/-, & meadow sufficient for 3 ploughteams. It was worth sixty shillings. The estate later passed to the Earls of Leicester, who subinfeudated it, & was afterwards held by the honour of Leicester, and the Duchy of Lancaster, whose overlordship was last mentioned in 1645. In the 13th. & 14th. centuries, there was an intermediary lordship held by the Goys family & later by the Bulstrodes of Bulstrode Manor, but this appears to have lapsed after 1339. In the reign of King John, the ownership in fee of the manor was obtained by the family of du Bois or de Bosco, William du Bois being mentioned as lord of the manor in 1213, & presenting to Chesham Bois church in 1216. Hugh de Bois succeeded, but by the year 1281, we are informed that the manor had passed to Sir Bartholomew Brianzon, who received a grant of free warren in 1286. He died in the same year, leaving a son William, aged three years, during whose minority Thomas de Hauville was appointed guardian. This William died without issue in 1310, & the manor is recorded to have passed to his brother, John, & on his death passed to his son of the same name. Upon his death in 1337/8, the manor was assigned to his widow, Margaret, in dower, his daughter & heir, Joan, being a minor. -

This little girl's title to the estate was ignored to satisfy a demand of Sir John de Moleyns, who was in possession by 1340. Ten years later we find the manor conveyed to William de Hanampstead, a grocer and citizen, of London. It was at a later date alienated to Peter de Braose, who in the year 1351, complained that his house at Chesham Bois had been broken into. He held the estate in 1365, but in 1390 it passed to the family of Winslow citizens of London. John Winslow, who presented to the church in 1392, died in 1423, & left the estate by will to his wife, Philippa, with reversion to his son, John. The latter disposed of the estate in 1446, to Sir Thomas Cheyne, by whose family it was held for 300 years. He was a Lollard and as such was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1414. He was succeeded by a son, John, who was several times Knight of the Shire & Sheriff of Bucks. -

Upon his death in 1466, his son of the same name succeeded, being then a baby of eight weeks, & during his minority Guy Wolston had the custody of the estate. During his lifetime this John Cheyne also inherited the manor & advowson of Drayton Beauchamp. He died in 1496, & is presumed to have been buried at Chesham Bois. By his marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Brudenell, lord of Raans in Amersham, the manor of Raans, with the Shardeloes estate, & Grove, Chesham, subsequently passed to the Cheynes.

He left a son, John, who died in 1535, & was succeeded by his son named Robert, who, in 1521, fell under suspicion as to the orthodoxy of his re-

ligious beliefs, & who it is said turned out one of his tenants for reading the New Testament & other works. He died in 1552, & was buried in Chesham Bois Chancel, by the side of his wife, Elizabeth, who predeceased him in the year 1516. His son, John, who succeeded him was a Parliamentary Member for Wycombe & in 1559 was appointed a Commissioner for the reformation of religion. He was twice married, his first wife being Winifred, daughter of Lord Mordaunt of Turvey, Beds. She died in 1562, being buried in the chancel of Chesham Bois church: and he later married Joice, daughter of Sir Anthony Lee of Quarrendon, Bucks. By a curious error, the Parish Register records that he married this Joice Lee on 29 November, 1561, a year before the death of his first wife. This John Cheyne died on 1 November, & was buried 1 December 1585 in the chancel of Bois parish church, where there is an elaborate altar tomb to commemorate him, adorned with coats of arms. By his second marriage there were two sons - John, the eldest, said to have been disinherited owing to his adherence to Romanism, who died in 1597, & a second son Francis, who succeeded to the estate after fighting a law suit with his brother. He died in 1619, & was succeeded by his son, William, who it is recorded died on 20 April, 1641 in London, & according to the Parish Register 'was buried in ye 'chancell of Boys Church, 22nd. day of the same month, 1641'. His daughter Temperance, married Rev. Richard Grafton, the chronicler & printer it is set down of the 'Great Bible' & one of the most zealous of the Reformers. These estates descended to a nephew, Francis, who died in 1644, having had 3 sons by his second wife, Anne, daughter of Sir William Fleetwood, a wealthy landowner of Missenden. These were William, who died in 1641, Francis who died in 1630, & Charles who was, in 1681, created Viscount Newhaven, & who became possessed of the estates. He was then 18 years of age, but was exempted by a special Act of Parliament from all wardship & marriage. He represented the Amersham Borough in Parliament in 1653, & married Jane, daughter of William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle, in 1655. His son, William Viscount Newhaven who, in 1680 had married Gertrude, sister of Evelyn Pierrepont, the 1st Duke of Kingston, inherited the estates upon his father's death in 1698.

This William died in 1728, without issue, & the manor passed to his widow who, in right of her ecclesiastical estate, claimed the Presentation to the church. In that year, when Archdeacon Clagett issued his citation both to the Minister and Churchwardens to appear at his Visitation, she seems to have resisted successfully & no attempt appears to have been made subsequently to deny or infringe upon the right claimed. On her death, the manor passed to John Leveson Gower, the second Lord Gower, who about the year 1738, conveyed it to John Russell, Duke of Bedford. It was held by this family until 1903, when it was purchased by Mr. J. W. Garrett-Pegge, J.P. of Chesham Bois Manor.

THE MANOR HOUSE - The original structure, of which no trace now remains, is thought to have been situate to the S.W. of the church in The Warren meadow, quite close to the house of that name. Chesham Bois House is held by one or two authorities to have been the Manor Dower House. Sheehan in his 'History of Bucks' (1862) says 'the field through which the carriageway to the house 'passed is now called Coach Meadow.'

THE PARISH CHURCH.

The Church is dedicated to St. Leonard, & stands on the brow of a hill, rising from Chesham Bois Moor, & was built in 1216. The chancel constituted

the original church, a nave with a door at the W. end being added in the 14th. century. Lipscombe, the County historian in 1842, tells us 'The Church is a small edifice consisting of a nave & chancel, & a tower surmounted by a small turret, in which is a clock, with its dial fronting the west. On the northern side of the nave are three windows, on the south side, four. In the chancel are two windows on each side, & one at the west end, almost all of them have pointed arches with plain mouldings. The entrance is at the west end. The interior is regularly and neatly pewed with oak; the pulpit and its sounding board elaborately carved. In the windows of the chancel are the arms of the Cheynes in coloured glass. In the chancel are three effigies in brass, & also a small brass with the effigy of a youth, enveloped in a close cap & shroud.'

The brass of a Chrysom-child, Benedict Lee, is of particular interest, & is thought to be the only brass of its kind in England, upon which appears a word 'chrysom' as applied to a deceased child. The brass measures 8 by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches & the inscription runs 'of Rog' Lee, gentilma' here lyeth the son' Benedict Lee 'chrysom' whos soule ihu p'do'. Near the pulpit is a hour glass stand made of iron. - The church was restored in 1884, when the north aisle & south western tower (porch) was added. The vestry is modern, & of recent years the church has been extended towards the west, & again restored.

BELLS - There are three bells, the first without inscription or date, a second is inscribed 'Chandler made me 1705', and a third, of pre-Reformation date, is stamped with shields bearing fleur-de-lis, & carries the inscription - 'Sancte Andrea Ora Pro Nobis'.

ADVOWSON - The chapel of St. Leonard was appurtenant to that half of Chesham church appropriated to the Abbey of St. Mary Pre, Leicester, & as such was claimed in 1216 by William, Abbot of Leicester against William du Bois, lord of the manor. The arrangement then arrived at deprived the abbot of all real authority, as William & his successors were allowed to nominate the chaplain, who was to be subject to the abbot's approval & to swear to observe the rights of the mother church. No further trouble arose with Leicester Abbey, and the advowson was always exercised by the lords of Chesham Bois manor until between 1877/8, when it was sold by the Duke of Bedford. In 1899, the gift of presentation was vested in the Rev. Alfred Peache, & is now in the gift of his trustees. During the 14th and 15th. centuries, the church acquired the right of burial & thus became almost independent, though we find in 1454, that it was a chapel dependent upon the Chesham church, & as such its members were granted a privilege of going in procession around Chesham church, instead of the one at Amersham, on Whit Monday. Although as long ago as 1470, it was referred to as a parish church, it was not until the beginning of the 19th. century that it definitely became the parish church of Chesham Bois.

PARISH REGISTERS - The Registers begin with the year 1562. The first book is of baptism, marriage and burial entries down to 1719. Beneath the title appear the names of 'James Gosham: Churchman & Roberte Finche: Churchman'. Though the designation 'churchman' is singular, it means churchwardens, & is found in use in the 17th. century. There is a Parish Account book for 1778-1792: & an Overseers' book for 1819-1837: & Vestry Order books from 1791 to date. -

It is thought that the absence of ancient records is due to the fact that the Cheyne family used to pay all the expenses.

THE RECTORY - The original building which, from old prints, is presumed to have been quite a small structure, was believed to have been on the Rectory paddock, where specimens of Tudor brickwork, etc. have been found. The present Rectory was built in 1833 by the Duke of Bedford during the time that a relative of the family, the Hon. & Rev. Lowther Barrington, was rector here. It is delightfully

situated on the Common, & is a replica of the buildings at Chenies erected by the Bedford family. Over the entrance to the Rectory are the arms of the Russells, with the date of erection.

LIST OF INCUMBENTS.

1216-1220. William de Risemberghe.	1608-1638. Philip Edmunds.
1225-1226. William de Londinio.	1638-1650. Holland Brandreth.
1245-1246. Alan de	1650-1661. Mr. Whitby.
..... Hugh.....	1661-1662. John Howes.
1295..... Thomas de Parva Linford.	1662-1677. Richard Chase.
..... Thomas de Hanvill.	1677-1704. John Hughes.
1330-1365. John de Parva Linford.	1704-1740. William Jones.
1365-1367. John de Waterfell.	1740-1767. John Ball, A.B.
1367-1392. Walter de Weston.	1767 Edward Emily, A.B., A.M.
1392-1393. William Gerveys.	1767-1793. Thomas Clarke, B.A.
1393..... John Martyn.	1793-1822. Robert Hall Butcher.
1393-1395. John Lach.	1822-1824. William Morris.
1395-1417. Thomas Aldeburgh.	1824-1830. John Wing.
1417..... John Neel.	1830-1839. Hon. Lowther Barrington.
1417-1418. Richard Wapounde.	1839-1843. James Stevens.
1418..... William Harvey.	1843-1868. Charles Blackman.
1521-1534. Robert Solatter.	1868-1892. Joseph Matthews.
1534-1570. William Salisbury.	1892-1906. George Gurnell Roworth.
1570-1598. Thomas Thomas.	1906-1923. Thomas Henry Fitzpatrick.
1598-1608. Robert Heron (Herne).	1923. George Henry Lawrence.

THE SCHOOL - A School was opened by the Rev. Thomas Clarke, who was Rector of this parish for 26 years (1767-1793). Among the pupils may be mentioned the Rev. T. T. Thomason (a well known missionary in India), Rev. Basil Wood, Rev. Wm. Goode, Sir Henry Blossett (Chief Justice of India), etc. - Some account of this estimable clergyman appears in 'Reminiscences of the Days of a School-boy in the last century' the work of one of his former scholars - James Rumsey, M.D. of Amersham. The frontispiece of this little book is a view of Bois Rectory and School as they existed in Mr. Clarke's time, & both have long since been demolished. - The now private house on Chesham Bois Common known as 'Downash' was at one time the village school. - The present school buildings are situate in Bois Lane & were erected in 1846.

THE MILL - In the Domesday Survey mention was made of a Mill worth 3/-, as being attached to the manor of Chesham Bois, to which it has always since been appendant. It was called a water mill in 1310, and was the subject of a dispute in 1585, when Francis Cheyne accused Henry Gorsom 'a disorderous and contentious person' of keeping away from the mill a laden horse & its master, whom Gorsom had 'stroken and verie evillie abused.' At this time the fulling and dyeing of cloth was actively carried on there, but this became extinct, and the building was later used for the production of flour, etc. - Other trades are mentioned in the Parish Registers, among them a solitary reference to a past industry - that of 'laceman'.

RELIGIOUS CENSUS - The returns of the Religious Census taken in 1676 gives the number of residents of Chesham Bois, above the age of 16 years, as - Conformists 49: Nonconformists 3. On the basis of the later Census taken in the reign of William 111, this would give a total population of 104. - Browne Willis, in the same century, says '13 families, say 78.'

CHARITIES - The Duke of Bedford's Charity consists of rents, the income be-

ing divided, one half for the relief of the rates, & the other half for the relief of the poor, administered by the Charity Commissioners. John Cheynes Charity, founded by a deed of 1581, consists of a yearly rent charge being on land at Chesham, one moiety being applied to the relief of the poor of Chesham Bois, & the other for the poor of Cholesbury.

ANCIENT BUILDINGS - IVY HOUSE FARM, about two thirds of a mile e. by S.E. of the church, on the S. side of the road to Chesham was built early in 17th. century, & was enlarged & restored in 19th. century. It is of two storeys & the upper storey is timber framed with rough cast filling.

BOIS FARM, house & barns, about $\frac{5}{8}$ mile W. of the church. It was built in the first half of the 17th. century, & originally extended further to the West. The original timber & brick remain at the E. end where there is the original chimney stack with thin brick.

CHAPTER 14 - COLESHILL.

THE MANOR OF COLESHILL, alias STOKEFEE or PLACE, alias OLD STOKE - This we learn appears to have formed part of the Conqueror's grant to Geoffrey de Mandeville, & was probably included in the manor of Elmodesham, but it later passed to a seprate manor, for, although not specifically enumerated among his lands either in Hertfordshire or Bucks at the time of the Domesday Survey, it is certain that the family of de Bohun, who succeeded to the estates of the Mandevilles, held this manor under the denomination of Stock Place or Old Stocks in the reign of King Edward 1, when Walter d'Agmondesham acknowledged that he 'had one messuage, one carucate of land, twenty acres of wood, & thirty shillings & one penny rent in the Stock, which William de Cotten held of Walter for life, the right of Humphrey Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex & his heirs for ever.' It afterwards passed with the manors of Raans & Agmondesham to the Brudenells: & in the reign of Henry VI was the property of Henry Brudenell, son & heir of William Brudenell, by Agnes, his wife, who was the daughter & heir of Thomas de la Grove. From this Henry the estate descended, in like manner as his lands at Amersham, Raans, Stoke Mandeville, etc, until 1506, when Thomas Brudenell conveyed Coleshill manor by fine & recovery to William Counser, by whom at a later date it was sold to Edmund Waller, son of Robert Waller of Amersham, who had married Anne, daughter of Griffith Hampden of Gt. Hampden, and aunt of the Patriot. -

Edmund Waller sold the estate to Sir Basil Brook, Kt. of Madeley Court, Co Salop. who in consideration of £1,860 conveyed the same in 1615, to George Coleshill, Attorney-at-law, of Ivinghoe Aston, who it is said demolished a greater part of the house & erected several tenements with the materials. - He later sold the residue of the manor, mansion & lands to James Perrot of Amersham, who conveyed the same to Henry Child, a Yeoman, of Amersham about 1665. This property passed to his son, Henry Child, & the estate was later purchased by the Trustees appointed by the last will & testament of Elizabeth Bent of Agmondesham, widow, who were directed to lay out £700 in the purchase of freehold lands, & to pay annually for ever to the Rector of Amersham, a stipend for preaching four sermons in the Parish Church there, & the remainder of the proceeds were to be applied 'to the comfort of 6 poor widows, being godly persons, constant attendants on Divine service, and at the Holy Communion.'

THE MANOR HOUSE or Mansion, which tradition has assigned as the birth-place of the Poet Waller, has been long since converted into a farmhouse, called Stock Place. Until the 19th. century, Coleshill hamlet was in Hertfordshire