

ROMSEY ABBEY AND TOWN.

A TRANSITION DOCUMENT:1539—1541.

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The town of Romsey has been brought so prominently before the public by the late successful pageant, that the opportunity of urging some townsman or member of the Hampshire Field Club to undertake the completion of its history should not be allowed to slip. A certain amount of material lies still unworked at the Public Record Office and elsewhere. There are Court Rolls of the year 1531, leading up to the suppression of the convent, and of the years 1548, 1555-6, 1560-1, and of 1588-98, the latter series being more or less consecutive. The Patent Rolls show entries relating to Romsey during Edward VI.'s reign, and there are occasional references during the reigns of Mary, Elizabeth, Charles I., and Charles II. Many wills of Romsey folk are to be found both at Somerset House and at Winchester, and interesting information may be culled from these documents. The miscellaneous collection of deeds in the possession of the mayor and corporation of Romsey should not be overlooked. At one time this collection embraced a far larger number of documents than it does now; but owing to the vandalism of our forefathers many records have been disposed of from time to time as waste paper, and have probably been used for book binding or, even for wrapping up bacon or tallow candles for the thrifty housewives of the town. No such fate will now-a-days overtake the residue, but the deeds ought to be removed from the old chest in the

Town Hall lumber room, if they still occupy these quarters, and they should be re-sorted and placed in card-board boxes, after the fashion of modern MSS. libraries; such a plan would keep them safe, and would render reference to them a comparatively easy task.

Some sources of information for the later history of the town having now been pointed out, the object of this paper may be best served by calling attention to a document belonging to the period immediately following the suppression of the convent. This document is of special importance because it acts the part of a bridge between the old and the new, connecting the past regime of the abbey with the subsequent activity of the town, and may thus be described as a "transition document." It is to be found enrolled in No. 446 of the Miscellaneous Books of the Augmentation Office, the office which controlled the enormous funds that poured into the royal treasury through the suppression of the monasteries.

This deed forms the account roll of the king's bailiff at Romsey, one Henry Warner. The first part deals with the manors of Romsey Extra and Infra, whilst the rest relates to the manors of More Abbott and More Malwyn in charge of Richard Douce, a member of a well-to-do yeoman family of the neighbourhood; of Ichynstoke with the Rectory there in charge of Leonard Palmes; of Sway near Christchurch in charge of John Foster the steward of the late convent; of Sidmanton in North Hampshire in charge of Thomas Wethers; of Hunlacy with Torleton by Coates in Gloucestershire in charge of Anne widow of Henry Pole; and of Bardolfeston within the parish of Pudell, Dorset, in charge of Sir Thomas Trenchard, knight.

This account roll covers a period of three years (each year ending Sep. 29th), 1539, 1540, and 1541, and the first year must therefore overlap by some six months the account kept by the convent up to the time of its suppression in the spring of 1539. This overlapping cannot have given Henry Warner much trouble, for he and a certain Thomas Webbe had been made bailiffs and collectors of rents by the abbess Elizabeth Ryprose on 20th Sep., 1538, in succession to Christopher

George and John Ray. These gentlemen therefore continued in office under the new order of things, and were indeed formally confirmed in their offices by the Crown on 13 Feb. 1541.

Henry Warner was probably a distant kinsman of the late abbess Anne Westbroke; he lived in 1544 in the old spytell or hospital which stood near the site of the modern British Schools, for which he paid but 2/- rent by the year, but he had a holding in Stretmede at a rent of 7/6, and another worth 10/-. From his will dated 3rd April, 1563, it appears that he died about that time, and that he was unmarried.

The will of Henry Warner runs as follows:—

In the name of God Amen, the 3rd day of Aprill in the yre of our Lord God a thousand fyve hundred three score and three, I, Henry Warner of Romesey in the County of Southampton, gentilman, being very sycke of bodye and of perfyte mynde and remembrance, fearynge the perill of death, do ordain and make this my last wyll and testament in manner and form following:—

- (1).—My soul to Almighty God my only maker and redeemer.—and my body to the earth.
- (2).—To my mother church of Winchester 2d.
- (3).—To the vicar of Romsey for tithes forgotten 4d.
- (4).—To John Harding my boye in ready money 20/- and a feather bed, bolster, pillow, with the bedsteade in the inner chamber, a joynd coffer, a lytill brass pot, 2 candlesticks, a platter, a pottinger a . . . dyshe, a blacke cote, all my shyrtes and all my hoses, to be delivered unto him by my executor, whensoever he shall think him mete and able to occupy it.
- (5).—I give also and bequeathe unto Jone Sharpe my servante for her paynes that she takes with me, in money 5/-, a drypping panne and a payre of pott hokes. To every one of her children 2/6 apiece.

- (6).—To Andrew Foster gentleman my damaske jerkyn.
 (7).—To the reparacions of the church in monie $3/4$.
 (8).—The residue to Thomas Yaxlee, clarke, vicar of Romsy,¹ whom I do make my executor to receive and pay my dettes as far as my goods and cattals shall extend.

These being witnesses,

GEORGE KYRBYE and
 JOHN BARTON.

Probate 5 Nov. 1563.

Thomas Yaxly executor.

The inventory of his goods amounted to £7 14s. 6d., or about £100 present day value, one of his "gownes was faced with foynes" and another with "blacke lame," together they were worth £1, as also "the hanginge in the hall."

Henry Warner's fellow bailiff, Thomas Webbe, seems to have rented Mynxton Mede near "le Pastury" and to have been tenant of holdings in Blanchampy, Tapesham, and Stretmede at rentals of 7/-; 2/7, and 10/8 respectively. He had obtained from the abbess and convent, 26 Nov. 1539, a 92 years' lease of Marlonde, and Little and Great Lusborough with a small house there at a rental of 13/4. This he seems to have occupied for a year or two, but there is a significant entry in the account roll, "for Richard Lister, Kt." A small house at Lusborough, built of stone, still exists and perhaps deserves more attention and examination than it has hitherto received.

These bailiffs received for fees and wages 66/8, plus the value of four yards of woollen cloth for livery, viz., 13/4, and also for pasture of four heifers or cows in the pasture of the late monastery 13/4, and for meat and drink, stabling for one horse, hay and straw for the same, £6 13s. 4d.; total £11 8s. 8d.

¹The name of a vicar of Romsey, who has not so far been known, is thus revealed by this will.

The other lay officers of the monastery received annual fees after the suppression as follows :—

Nicholas Waddeham, collector of rents,	£7.
John Wintershull, principal steward,	£6.
Peter Westbroke	} under stewards, £22 14s.
Alexander Curtopp	
Thomas Foster	} receivers of all demesnes, etc., £20 3s. 4d.
John Foster	
John Calkyn, keeper of the swans,	6/8.
Peter Lark	} general auditors, £4.
Henry Huttoft	
Christopher Shorte, woodward,	£3 6s. 8d.

Nicholas Waddeham was either the father of the two nuns Catherine and Jane, nieces of the late Queen Jane Seymour, or some near relative; if the former, he was governor of the Isle of Wight.

Peter Westbroke, appointed under steward in 1525, was undoubtedly a relative of the abbess Anne Westbroke who died in 1515; he is described as of Southampton, and he had other relatives in Hampshire both in and out of the convent. He held a piece of meadow in Waldyng, and also the tenement called "the Clerke's Chamber" with tenements and buildings annexed, together with a parcel of the outer court of the monastery and a parcel of land called Paradise; these lay just inside the great gate of the monastery, and Peter Westbroke paid a rent of 6/8. He is described as a gentleman in the subsidy roll of 1549, and pays the tax on an assessment of £30 a year. He died about August 1550, leaving Alice his wife to mourn his loss; one of the witnesses to his will was Thomas Webbe the bailiff.

The swans, of which John Calkyn was the keeper, must have lent to the Romsey meadows an additional charm, with which the inhabitants are no longer familiar. This "farm of swans on the rivulet" was let in 1541, by the king's commissioners, to John Foster, gentleman.

The auditor Peter Lark was probably the father of Jane, who married Sir George Powlett of Crundel, a brother of the first Marquis of Winchester.

The Huttofts were Hampshire folk. One Master Harry Huttoft writes letters to Cromwell relative to Beaulieu Abbey during the years 1533-37; a Henry Huttoft, probably the same, took the Romsey Mills on lease, and a John Huttoft was sub-tenant to lands there owned by the Dean and Chapter of Windsor, a similar holding coming into Henry's hands. John, with his co-auditor Peter Larke, had been appointed by the convent on 26 April, 1536; they received £4 a year for their services; this fee was dropped in 1540-1 by order of Sir Richard Riche, the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, "because distress for the same refers to the Manor of Edington," in possession of Thomas Seymour, Knight.

The roll of Annuitants belonging to the Abbey made a considerable charge on the funds. A sum equal to about £415 of present day money was paid from the Extra and Infra Manors. [*i.e.*, £11 19s. 8½d. + £22 12s.; see below.]

Romsey Extra Manor was liable to:—

(1.) Edward Smythe	...	...	for	£1	6	8
(2.) William Andrewes	...	...	"	1	6	8
(3.) Francis Strowde	...	...	"	2	0	0
(4.) Thomas Sampson	...	...	"	3	6	8
(5.) Thomas Draner	...	...	"	3	0	0
(6.) Bishop of Winchester	...	...	"	6	8	
(7.) Prior and Convent of S. Swithun	...	...	"	3	4	
(8.) Archdeacon of Winchester, etc.	...	...	"	9	8½	
Total	...	...		£11	19	8½

But this does not include a large annuity of £23 6s. 8d. which the convent agreeded on 1 Sep., 1536, to pay to John Forster, knight, in consideration of an annuity which they used to pay for the chapel of S. Andrew within the infirmary, and the chapel of S. Peter within the abbey for two chaplains, with meat and drink. This seems a curious transaction; possibly it means that, with the diminished number of sisters in the convent, the services of these two chaplains was not required, and that John Forster, for the payment of a sum of money for repairs or to meet debts, bought this annuity for his life. The title of knight added to his name throws doubt on the suggestion that he is to be

identified with Foster the receiver, who was an M.A. and in holy orders, and became the incumbent of Baddesley. However this may be, the gentleman obtained confirmation of his annuity from the Crown on 12 Feb., 1540.

Of the other annuitants, Francis Strowde and Thomas Draner obtained their rights just before the suppression of the convent, under date 20 Sep., 1538, and the former received a confirmation 20 Nov., 1542, but the latter seems to have neglected the matter, for he was not paid according to the bailiff's account roll at Michaelmas, 1541, and he did not get his right confirmed until 3 Mar., 1542.

Thomas Sampson, a cleric, was an annuitant by reason of a very ancient custom; the king, it appears, had the right of appointing a clerk as an annuitant of the abbey when a new abbess was made; this had been done when Anne Westbroke became abbess, and Thomas Sampson entered on the benefit 7 Nov., 1515, and the Crown confirmed his annuity on 4 Mar., 1539, declaring its continuance, "unless the king promoted him to another benefice;" this, however, appears to have happened, for he did not receive his annuity after Sep., 1539. The date of this annuitant's confirmation by the Crown on 4 Mar., 1539, is of no slight interest, because it proves that the suppression of the Abbey had by that time been completely effected. Thomas Sampson was either a native of Romsey, or else he brought his father and mother, John and Alice Sampson, to live there. John made his will 20 Dec., 1502, leaving 1/- to the high altar for tithes forgotten or neglected, and another 1/- for the repair and sustentation of the parish church, besides 1/- each to the fraternity of S. George and Master Thomas Neyle, "meo curato," the vicar. The latter and Thomas Sampson, the son, were witnesses.

There had been another annuitant of this class, Henry Benett, who was appointed on the death of Elizabeth Ryprose as abbess, under date 7 Feb., 1524, but though the annuity was confirmed to him on 4 July, 1539, there is no entry of a payment in the account roll of that year, he may therefore have received another benefice in the meanwhile, or he may have died before the annual payment was due.

Romsey Infra Manor was liable to:—

(1.) Stephen Egerton	...	...	for £2 0 0
(2.) John Taillour	...	...	" 2 0 0
(3.) John Foster	...	...	" 7 12 0
{ (4.) Simon Gibbes	{	...	" 1 6 8
Thomas Dawes	}		
John Lewez			
(5.) William Appowell	...	...	" 2 0 0
(6.) Thomas West	...	...	" 1 6 8
(7.) John Atkins	...	...	" 1 6 8
(8.) John Wintershull	...	...	" 1 0 0
(9.) S. Denis' Priory	...	...	" 2 0 0
(10.) Priory of Ederos	...	...	" 2 0 0
Total	...	...	<u>£22 12 0</u>

Stephen Egerton held a tenement in Banning Street at a rent of 3/4. John Tayllour was tenant "of the whole rectory of the town and parish of Romsey, with all tithes and a large new barn with 30 waggon loads of fuel:" he had taken this on 28 Nov., 1538, for 80 years, and paid £26 13s. 4d., a year rent. The proceeds of this rectory had up to the suppression formed the stipend of the Prebendary of S. Laurence, of Romsey. Tayllour paid his rent to the Crown for the two years, 1539 and 1540, when the agreement became void, the rectory being granted in 1541 to "the Dean and Chapter of the Royal College of the Holy Trinity, Winchester." His pension, however, which was secured to him by the convent on 20 Sep., 1538, was confirmed to him by the Crown on 20 June, 1542.

John Foster, the steward, who always obtained favourable consideration, had been installed as chaplain "to celebrate Divine service for the souls of Nicholas Braffeld and his wife within the parish church of Romsey," and though this duty must have soon ceased, the Crown continued the pension, by decree, in 1541.

The annuity of two corrodies, that is daily provision for two persons, had been paid by Romsey to S. Denis Priory since 1130; at this time S. Denis had granted this provision to one John Bold. He, however, died on 28 Nov., 1540, after receiving two year's payments. This John was probably the son of a John Bold, who died in 1490, leaving bequests to his wife Thomasine, to his sons John and

William, his daughter Isabella, and to the son of Luce Calkyn, of Romsey. Possibly the latter was the John Calkyn, keeper of the swans, mentioned above. A similar corrody, issued from Romsey to the priory of Ederos, or Ivychurch, but from what date is unknown. This had been granted to one of the Seymours, Robert by name, who received the money for two years, but a William Grene is entered as accepting the payment for the third year, 1541.

The vicar, like other folk at this time, experienced changes with regard to his relations to the abbey property. Under the old order, he appears to have rented a tenement, in which he lived, at £1 per annum. Under the new state of things the rent was returned to him in recompense of £2, which the abbess and convent had been accustomed to pay him to provide bread, wine, and wax for the parish church.

The mills, which had for many centuries played an important part in the life of the abbey and town, receive several references in this document. One John Kinge pays £12 11s. 8d. rent for the two water mills called the "Towne Mills," with their fishings and three acres of pasture called Shetilhams. These had been let to him on 6 Feb., 1533, for 20 years; the mills for £12, the fishings for 3/4, and the pasture for 8/4. Henry Huttoft, gentleman, paid £10 a year for the corn mills called the Mede Mill and the Malte Mill, lately in tenure of John Risbriger, and the fulling mill and "Lez Stockes," lately in the tenure of Robert Blossse. Formerly the corn mills had been let, the one for £12, and the other for £2 13s. 4d.; and the fulling mill for £6, the abbey bearing all "reparacions," but the new tenant had to bear repairs in carpenter's work, "lez wallinge, dawbinge, wheles, cogges, rongis and flud yeates, weyers, ryddinge ramynge, and millestones." John Risbriger seems to have continued at Romsey, for he rented a house in Churvyld Street at 13/4. Probably he had retired from business and lived on his savings.

The old gatehouse of the monastery, with a chamber built above and a tenement annexed, called "the Receyvyour's lodginge," was leased for 6/8 to John Richards, who a few

years later is found as a tenant of a cottage at Abredge, in the parish of Michelmershe, belonging to Romsey Abbey, at a rental of 2/8. There were "20 oke and ashes of 40 to 60 years growth" on the place.

For a good many years previous to the suppression much of the abbey property had been going to decay, repairs having been neglected; it is not, therefore, surprising to find that money had to be spent on various houses, or that some were unlet. In 1541 the bailiffs had to spend £21 16s. 10½d., no small sum, as follows:—

		Repairs.		Rental.	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.
John Dyer's	tenement ...	...	19 6	2	0 0
Thomas Symson's	" ...	7	11 7½	1	0 0
Richard Mukelow's (the late)	" ...	7	16 0½	10	0
John Cocke's	" ...	3	8	13	4
Robert Coke's	" ...	12	3	2	0 0
Towne Mill (wood and ironwork)	" ...	1	13 7		
Squaring tiles and sawing timber, quick-lime, iron nails, etc.	...	2	17 7		
For making a scolding cart	...	2	8		
		<u>£21 16 10½</u>			

The last entry suggests that the manners of some of the inhabitants needed attention as much as their houses. Perhaps the break-up of the old system of town government had set many tongues wagging.

What with repairs, pensions, and charges, the Crown did not draw a very large sum from the Romsey Treasury.

	Receipts.	Expenditure.	Profit.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
(1.) Romsey Extra ...	148 17 10½	115 7 6½	24 1 8
		2 8 8	
(2.) " Infra ...	47 8 2½	7 0 0	7 0 6½
		40 5 8	
(3.) More Abbas ...	22 12 0	2	0
(4.) Ichenstoke ...	30 12 3	...	22 12 0
(5.) Sway ...	1 4 0	4 18 4	25 13 11
(6.) Sydmanton ...	34 13 11½	...	1 4 0
(7.) Hunlacy ...	6 13 4	19 10	33 14 1½
(8.) Bardolfeston ...	2 0 0	...	6 13 4
		...	2 0 0
	<u>£294 1 7½</u>	<u>£171 2 2½</u>	<u>£122 19 7</u>

It will be seen from the above table that the Romsey Extra Manor yielded a profit of only £24. 1s. 8d., and that the Infra Manor gave, in proportion, no better result. The management of so scattered an estate, and one which yielded, in the case of some of its manors so poor a profit, may have proved an incentive to make grants to private persons who, for local reasons, desired to acquire the lands. In 1544¹ a large grant of the Romsey Manor was made to Messrs. Foster and Marden for the sum of £900, and a list of the tenants and rentals is entered in the deed; the names of between 80 and 90 inhabitants are given, and in some cases the locality of their holdings is inserted. The rentals varied from 1/3 to £2, cottages and gardens would therefore seem to have been cheap at Romsey at this time, for these sums, even if multiplied by 12, to obtain the present day value of money, range only from 15/- to £24.

Ichynstoke Manor, which yielded a better profit, was granted to William Poulet, Knight, Lord Seint John. The manor included the rectory, and it bore a charge of £1 6s. in augmentation of the vicar's stipend, viz., 17s., the price of three quarters of wheat, and 9s., the price of three quarters of barley. The fisheries were taken account of; that at "le Jarre" being let for 8/-, that from Letilbryge to Ichynstoke for 8/8, and that of the water of Sotyslade and Westlake at 4/-. The demesne lands had been let to Richard Stafferton, a gentleman, but were at this time in the hands of Joan Palmes, the widow of Guy Palmes, sergeant-at-law. A description of one of the farms is worth extracting, because it preserves certain names. It runs:—"The farm of all lands. . . . As well north of 'la portewey,' as well south of the same, called 'Riplinges' and 'Southcote,' with closes, meadow and pastures by the banks of the waters called Abbottiston water and Riplinges water."

The manor of Sidmanton was granted in 1540 to John Kingismill, gentleman, of Wytchurche, and to Constance, his wife, for £975 5s. 10d. The family still possess the receipts from the Crown, which are now regarded as rare documents. Thomas Wethers was the king's collector, and Richard

¹ Letters and Papers, Henry VIII., Vol. XIX., II. §., 800 (24.)

Wethers leased the demesne. Mention is also made of a pastures called "Donymede" and "Pontesdowne." Perhaps, an entry relating to "the price of 467 hen's eggs, of variable rent of the tenants," is worth a mention, it amounted at that date to no more than 2/-, which would mean to-day 6d. a dozen.

This account roll illustrates the break up of the monastic estates, and its list of pensioners exhibits the last strands which connected the Romsey Manor with the old order of things; but it does not yield up, with any clearness, information as to how the town was ruled after the disappearance of the abbeys. The church was committed to the care of four guardians; and according to Mr. Latham, it was agreed, with the consent of the Bishop of Winchester, in 1603, that twenty persons of the parish should have the government and direction of the church and all the goods and stock. But what of the town? No charter from the Crown has hitherto come to light. Mention of "a mayor and constables" is made in a will of 1558, but nothing is known as to when such officers comes into existence or of how they were appointed. It is possible that the king's bailiff at the first assumed the office of chief magistrate, inasmuch as he probably presided also at the manor courts; and his provision of a scolding cart, mentioned in the account roll, looks as if the responsibility of keeping good order rested on his shoulders. Some chance notice may yet shed light on this interesting point, and reward a future search into the dark corners of the history of the birth of Romsey town.
