

ROMSEY ABBEY REGISTERS.

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THE record of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in the Parish of Romsey from their commencement in January 1569/70 to 1812 is contained in five volumes kept in the safe in the Vestry of the Abbey Church. Their contents and the periods which they cover are as follows :—

(1)	Ba.	Bu.	Ma.	-	-	-	1569-1629
(2)	Ba.	Bu.	Ma.	-	-	-	1629-1727
(3)	{	Ba.	Bu.	-	-	-	1727-1756
		Ma.	-	-	-	-	1727-1754
(4)	Ma.	-	-	-	-	-	1754-1802
(5)	{	Ba.	Bu.	-	-	-	1756-1812
		Ma.	-	-	-	-	1802-1812

The vicars of Romsey during this period were :—

1567	Edward Walker.
1575	Hugh Langly.
1579	Roger Richardson.
1586	Henry Hopkins.
1589	George Blunt.
1590	Samuel Adams.
1620	Robert Bostock.
1626	Joseph Avery.
1637	Antony White, M.A. Corpus Ch., Oxon.
1648	John Warren.
1662	Thomas Doughty, M.A. Magdalene College, Cambridge.
1667	Jacobus Wood, M.A.
1670	Samuel Wartensius.
1680	Thomas Donne, M.A. St. John's, Oxon.
1683	Joshua Mitchell.
1690	William Mayo.
1727	John King.
1742	John Peverell.
1780	John Woodburne.
1807	Daniel Williams.

It is proposed to give a short account of each volume, calling attention to entries of interest and any special notes that are recorded.

Volume I.

A quarto paper book bound in vellum, originally with clasps which are now broken away. It has been re-bound at some period in its original covers. There are a succession of handwritings not always coterminous with the periods of incumbency of the various vicars. Though most of the entries, if not theirs, are made by educated scribes often with a knowledge of Latin.

The earlier hands are in the Elizabeth characters, not easy to read without practice.

The entries are arranged in three columns for :—Christenings, Weddings, Burials, with one page for each month.

The first entry, dated Jan VI 1569/70 R. Elizabeth XII is :—Christened. Richard Barnard.

There are few entries of interest for the rest of the century.

1602/3 there is a note :—“*Jacobus Rex Scotiae regnum Angliae transmutatur ; and four months later :—Jacobus VI, Rex Scotiae, coronatus Angliae & Franciae est Rex, Defensor Fidei.*”

1604 Nov “*Jacobus 6 proclamatus rex Britanniae Majoris est.*”

1605 Sept 10 William Fleming, armiger, obiit.

He was the son of Sir Francis Fleming who acquired the Manor of Romsey infra at the dissolution of the Abbey, and was probably the builder of Broadlands.

1607 Nov 3 Andrew Foster, gent, buried.

He was the son of John Foster of Baddesley, the last Steward of the Abbey who at the dissolution married one of the nuns, Jane Wadham. She was a niece of Queen Jane Seymour and of Protector Somerset.

1615 Thomas Kirkeby buried, armiger.

He was one of the family that occupied Stanbridge Earls from the reign of Edward III down to 1658.

1619 Nov 17 John Royden, alias Hayward. bur.

A tablet to his memory in the name of Hayward, on the South side of the altar in the chancel, is the oldest mural tablet in the church.

1620 Sept 12 Bur. Samuel Adams, Pastor hujus ecclesiae.

1623 June 23 Chr. William, son of Anthonie Pettye.

This was the famous Sir William Petty, F.R.S., Scientist and Physician, the ancestor of the Marquess of Lansdowne. His grave is in the North side aisle of the chancel and there is an effigy memorial at the South-West end of the nave.

1623 June, a note, “This year was begun the painting of our church.” No doubt this was the whitewash which had to be removed with so much labour in the middle of the 19th century.

1623/4 March, “This year were the bells hung up in the tower and the work finished in the month of November, a little before Christmas and in the following Jan. was the old belfry taken down.” The site of this, which belonged to the church until a few years ago, is on the east side of the churchyard.

1626 July 29 “Joseph Avery, minister, took possession of the church of Rumsey as vicar of the place. Item, that the same Joseph Avery did read the book of the Articles the next Sabbath following, being the 30th day of the same month.”

The story of Joseph Avery, vicar of Romsey, is worth a note. The account of him comes from an article by Professor S. E. Morrison, of Harvard University, contributed in 1935 to the magazine of St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, of which Joseph Avery was a graduate. He took his M.A. degree in 1621, five years before he became vicar of Romsey.

We do not know the circumstances under which nor the exact date when he resigned. But in 1634, in company with his devoted friend, Peter Thacher, and accompanied by his whole family party of eleven, he migrated to Boston in U.S.A.

The following year the whole party set out from Newbury, where they had settled, to found a Mission at Marblehead. On the way by sea with all their possessions they were caught in a terrible storm and all the Averies were washed out of the boat and drowned. Thacher and his wife were saved.

Before being finally submerged, Avery delivered up an inspiring prayer which his friend recorded and which two centuries later became the subject of a poem by Whittier called the "Swan song of Parson Avery."

Avery was a strict Puritan or, as Winthrop, the famous Governor of Massachusetts, described him:—"a precious holy Minister."

It seems likely that his resignation from Romsey was due to pressure if not to persecution by Archbishop Laud, who was exceedingly active at this time in trying to get rid of Puritan Clergy from the Church.

1628 Aug A note at the bottom of the page in Avery's hand records:—"George, Duke of Buckingham was stabbed at Portsmouth the 23 day of this month, being St Bartholomew's eve."

Felton's assassination of Buckingham must have made a great sensation to be recorded in the Romsey Register.

The entries at the end of this volume are crowded, to get three months on to one page.

Volume II.

A folio, vellum-leaved book, bound like Vol. I in vellum. The original clasps are broken away here too.

The entries for the first part of the volume are, as in the first volume, in three columns. It begins Jan 1st 1629/30. The handwriting is modern and easily legible.

1635 May With an unexplained change of writing the entries become Latinised. The Christian names are in Latin form, 'Ricardus' for Richard, 'filius' and 'filia' for son and daughter; the headings are 'Baptismata,' 'Sponsalia' and 'Funera.'

1637 brought a new vicar, Antonius White. He wrote a most attractive, semigothic hand. He made all the entries himself and continued so to do throughout his eleven years of tenure. He begins in the Register with an ornate heading in a frame:—

"Antonius White, in artibus Magister, Collegii Corporis Christi in Academia Oxoniensi, quondam Sacellanus ecclesiae Wargravensis, nuper Vicarius inductus fuit in vicariam perpetuam de Romsey. Annis, Servatoris 1637 et R. Caroli 13."

There is a little Latin couplet added which shows his classical bent:—

"Ecce, 'Aqua' quos Christo sacrat, quos 'Ignis' amoris
Conciliat casti, quos quoque 'Terra' tegit."

Behold, the names of those whom water consecrates to Christ, of those whom the Fire of chaste love unites, of those also whom the Earth covers.

From this point the Baptisms, Marriages and Burials are separated to different parts of the book.

BAPTISMS.

1637/8 Jan 12 Anne Appleford, dau of Mr Daniel Appleford ye Town Clerk. At this christening of this child some of the quire of ye cathedral church of Winton came over and sang some sacred anthems in the church, our organs going with them.

*1645/6 Mar 8 Moses Green, son of Westwood ; the first child that was baptised according to the new Directory, by Doctor ffaithful. He gave thanks for his wife's safe delivery in the pulpit. She was not present ; which was all the churching she had.

The vicar was evidently not himself carrying out the new Act at this time. The Commons had abolished the Book of Common Prayer in January of this year and made the " Directory " the only legal Service book in England ; but owing to opposition from the Independants the use of the new book was never very strictly enforced. Antony White seems to have given in by the following year for there is this entry :—

1647 Mar 13 Jone Moses, dau. of Nicolas, the first child wh. I baptised according to the new directory enjoyed by the ordnance of the Lords and Commons assembled in parliament.

From 1656 to 1661 there are records of the christening of four children of the new vicar, John Warren. White had died 1648.

There is no record of how Warren came to be appointed. As he was subsequently described as ' Intruder ' he was not presumably appointed by the Dean and Chapter of Winchester to whom the gift of the living belonged as successors of the Abbess, and it is doubtful if he had ever been ordained to the Church of England. He belonged to a Romsey family many of whose names appear in the registers.

1662 Among the christenings of this year comes the heading announcing the appointment of a new vicar :—

Thomas Doughty, in artibus magister, Wakefeldiae in agro Eboracensi natus, Coll. Magdal. apud Cantabrigiens nuper inductus fuit in vicariam perpetuam paroecialis de Romsey, Anno Dom. Servatoris, 1662 Sept 20.

John Warren, the intruder, had refused to comply with the Test Act of 1662 and had been ' extruded ' from the living.

1662 Another new vicar is recorded :—Jacobus Wood, in Artibus Magister, nuper inductus fuit in vicariam perpetuam ecclesiae parochialis de Rumsey, Anno Dom 1666 Oct.

1680 A similar record of Thomas Donne, Artium Magister, Coll. Joannis Bapt. Oxon, olim socius.

In spite of his Fellowship at Oxford he was a very careless scribe, and the record from this time on becomes very irregular and is kept in illiterate hands.

* This entry has been smudged and re-written in another hand.

MARRIAGES.

1654. Aug 14 John Warren, Vicar of Rumsey and Phebe Gouldwire.

1659. April 26 William Baily and Jeane Toule, the man of Nutshilling parish, the woman of Rumsey. They were married by order of the Justices, the woman being with child beforehand, in the presence of Edward Beard, whose servant the man was, and Richard Lee, Tything man of Nutshilling parish.

The Commonwealth was a distinctly Paternal Government.

1671 July 20. Samuel Wartensius and Judith Jordan married at Timsbury by Mr Reynolds.

Wartensius had been appointed vicar of Romsey early this year.

BURIALS.

1638 May 11 John Adderly, killed in the tower by the fall of the great bell.

It will be remembered that the bells had only been set up in the tower fourteen years earlier.

1638 Oct 14 A bastard child, murdered before baptism.

1639 Jun-2 Richard Wale y^e elder, giver of a new organ to the church.

1643 Sept 8 Daniel Appleford, gent, Villae Clericus.

There is an interesting epitaph on the tombstone of his wife Elizabeth, who died November 17, 1630. It is now, broken into two pieces, close to the pulpit, though originally in the chancel :—

“Behold interred lies under
A light, a treasure and a wonder :
A light to all, her husband's treasure,
Wonder of women, 'twas God's pleasure.”

Elizabetha Appleford, uxor Danielis Appleford, Generosi.

1643 Sept 22 Francis Saint Barbe, sonne of Henry, Esquire hurt at the fight at Newbury.

Henry St. Barbe, the grandson of William Fleming referred to above, was now the owner of Broadlands. His two sons, Francis and John, were in the Parliamentary Army, commanding Troops of Horse under Col. Richard Norton of Southwick. Francis was wounded at the first battle of Newbury on September 20 and must have been brought home to Broadlands to die.

In the following December are recorded the names of six soldiers slain “at the routing of the King's forces at Romsey Dec 12.” This was in the raid made on Romsey on the morning of that day by Col. Norton from Southampton. One was a Capt. D'Arcy. The town was re-occupied by the Royalists soon after.

1644 Feb 16 is the record of Richard Gold, a soldier, slayne by his own musket ‘per infortunam.’

From March 13 to 22 there are more entries of soldiers slain after another engagement which took place at Romsey on March 12th. This was the result of another raid from Southampton,

unsuccessful this time, as the raiders after occupying the town were themselves surprised and lost between 80 and 100 prisoners, some of whom were found to be Royalist deserters, one of whom at least, William Morris, was, as recorded in the register, "hanged upon the Swan signpost" in the market place. Three of these entries are recorded as soldiers from "Hampton" and one as "a soldier of the King."

1645 May 10 A soldier, whose name unknown, hanged for murder when Sr Th Fairfax in Towne.

This man had apparently committed burglary and murder in Ringwood through which Fairfax passed on his return march from Blandford to Oxford.

1646 July 14 Elizabeth White, wife of Antony, vicar of Romsey.

1648 Dec 4 Antony White, vicar of Romsey.

His entries had been maintained regularly until shortly before his death though the beautiful handwriting had become a little shaky.

As a round-up to the 'end' of 1648 comes the only Greek word met in the Register, "τέλος."

1649 Nov 23 Roger Spearing, "Titulo doctor, sed re vera pauper medicus," "Doctor in title but in truth a poor practitioner." It looks as if someone who was now keeping the Register was determined to have his own back on the poor doctor, even if it was in dog-Latin.

1653 Nov 10 Mary^e wife of John Warren, vicar. It will be noted that he re-married the following year.

1658 Sept 2 John St Barbe and Grissell his wife.

This was the brother of Francis, killed at Newbury, and he was now the owner of Broadlands. There is a fine memorial to them in the S. Transept of the Abbey put up by their son, Sir John St. Barbe, Bart. But this gives no hint as to how they came to be buried on the same day.

1663 Mar Thomas Doughty is now signing the Register as vicar, John Warren having been-extruded.

1666 January 8 A child of John Warren, cleric, 'unbaptised.'

This is in the hand of Doughty who presumably would not recognise the right of John Warren to baptise.

1666 Feb 13 Elizabetha, wife of Thomas Warren, cleric.

Thomas Warren was the 'nonjuror' vicar of Broughton, a brother of John. He was the founder of the Congregational Church in Romsey and was buried in the S. Transept of the Abbey, January 1694, at a time when there was a gap in the Register. There is a very nice epitaph on his tombstone.

1674 Apr 1 Phebe, wife of Mr John Warren.

1678 A note: "Then came in the Act for the burying in wool."

This was enacted to bolster up the wool trade which was suffering from competition with the import of linen from Ireland. There was instruction that

a certificate should be given, which appears in some Registers, that the Act had been complied with.

There is no record of the burial of Sir William Petty who died in 1687 and was buried in the South side-aisle of the Chancel. The Register was very faulty at this period.

From March 1700 onwards the entries are kept in a separate paper-leaved addition, bound in at the end. It was fairly well kept for a year or two with a few Latin words, but then became very illiterate and irregular. There are quite long periods without entries and it finally stops altogether in 1719.

Volume III.

A vellum-leaved folio book bound in vellum. It is headed : Rumsey Parish Register Book for Christenings, Marriages and Burials ; bought S. 1727 ; cost (blank).

Richard Hammond }
William Gass } Church wardens

It begins in a fine, bold, copybook hand, occasionally using Latin words. The record is well and regularly kept but contains few entries of interest. The three kinds of entry are in separate parts of the book.

BAPTISMS.

1733 Sept 26 Mary, wife of Richard Rosjar, Anabaptist, aged about 45 years.

Mary Beetle, aged about 35 years, lately a Quaker, baptised a member of the Church of England.

1743 Singo Flower King, a negro servant of Mr Flower.

From 1745 to 1753 the Register is signed at the end of each year by the vicar, John Peverell, after which date he seems to have left the keeping of the Register to a curate.

The average entries about this time, which were summarised each year, were :—

Baptisms	-	-	-	79.8
Marriages	-	-	-	24.2
Burials	-	-	-	79.9

If the records were at all complete for baptisms, there would not be any great increase of population in Romsey at this time. In a number of cases there is a note to the effect that the burial was in the church. It apparently had become fashionable and probably a source of revenue to the church, for those who could afford it to be so buried. It had previously been rather a rare occurrence.

MARRIAGES.

1736 Nov 24 John King, vicar of Rumsey and Mrs Henrietta Maria St Barbe.

1749 Sept 22 The Rev John Peverell, vicar of the parish and Miss Margaret Duvall of Southampton.

BURIALS.

1749 Aug 17 Honorable and most good Richard Temple.

This was the son of the 1st Lord Palmerston and grandfather of the Prime Minister. He died before his father.

The first Lord Palmerston had bought Broadlands in 1733 after the death of Sir John St. Barbe without children.

1747 Feb 14 Mrs. Jane Nowes. She was daughter of John Nowes Esq., of Lee who had died in 1719 leaving a charity for the apprenticing of Romsey boys, to come into effect after the death of this his only daughter. The charity is still in being and is used now chiefly to assist education.

Vol. III closes with one page of marriages and one of burials continued from the previous part of the book.

The last entry is a note, dated Mar 25 1754 :—

Here commences the Act of Parliament to prevent clandestine marriages. Therefore for the continuation of the Register of marriages, see the new book provided for the purpose.

Volume IV.

This is the book referred to. It is a volume of printed forms. It was kept regularly by successive curates, Job Beardsley, John Evans, James Burch and in 1774 began the long ministry of Daniel Williams, who continued in office until his death in 1833, when he had completed fifty-nine years at the Abbey, at first as curate and subsequently as vicar. He was buried at the West end of the nave.

During the whole of this volume, which ends in 1802, there is no entry by the vicar, John Peverell, or by his successor, John Woodburn, who was inducted in 1780.

This book of forms gives little scope for side-notes of interest and there are no marriages which call for special note.

After a marriage on January 10, 1772, of William Galpine and Susannah Figes there is a small note at the bottom signed with indecipherable initials :—I forgive them both.

Pasted into the end of the volume is a document in French, addressed to M. le Juge de paix, calling his attention to the unhappy position of certain French Royalists who had been cited in the Romsey Court for some occurrence which is not explained, by which they appear to have suffered hardship. It is signed by three Royalist officers.

Volume V.

This is a large book, 18in. by 12in., bound in vellum. It is made up of three separate parts bound together. The covers are partly broken away.

- (1) A volume, 15in. by 10in., of Baptisms and Burials 1756-1778
- (2) A larger one, 18in. by 12in., of Baptisms and Burials 1779-1802
- (3) Three printed Register Books for :—
 - (a) Marriages; (b) Baptisms; (c) Burials 1802-1812

Points of interest in this volume are not numerous.

1757 June 18 records the death of Lord Viscount Palmerston.

This was the first Viscount, who bought and re-modelled Broadlands.

1757 Oct 22 Le Chevalier de Puiberneau, officer of the French Navy.

1762 Aug 19 Isabella, Viscountess Palmerston.

She was the widow of the 1st Viscount.

About this time the number of entries recording burial in the church was considerable.

1769 June 8 Frances, Lady Viscountess Palmerston.

A mural tablet at the West end of the church records that Frances, first wife of the 2nd Viscount, died in child-bed.

1778 There is a note :—"a severe putrid fever raged in Romsey this year." The number of burials, 147 for the year, was 50 per cent. above the average.

1785 May 31 Good Gaspar, a Greek, upwards of 60 years servt ; to Robt Barton Esq of Rownhams. There is a very-laudatory mural tablet to Gaspar facing that of his master in the retro-choir.

1786-1787 there are three records of death from Smallpox.

In 1796 the deaths of 13 soldiers are recorded belonging to different regiments quartered in or near Romsey.

The regiments mentioned are :—

The Queen's Regiment of Foot.

The 2nd Regiment of Foot.

The 102nd Regiment.

The Sussex Militia.

1796 Sept 9 Mrs. Mee. This was presumably the mother of Lord Palmerston's second wife.

1796 Sept 23 John Franke Poisson, French Priest of the parish of St Eny, Diocese Coutance. No doubt an *émigré*.

1798 Jan 23 Mrs. Ann Latham. This was the wife of Dr. John Latham, the famous archaeologist, whose extensive seven volumes of MS. Notes on Romsey are in the British Museum.

1798 Apr 11 Robert Barton Esq. "very good and kind friend." D.W. He was the master of Good Gaspar.

1800 Thirteen of the deaths recorded were noted as being due to Smallpox.

About this time Dr. Godwin Seward, a local doctor, whose name appears in the Register as Churchwarden and who was three times Mayor of Romsey, was experimenting in connection with Edward Jenner, in the preparation and use of calf lymph for vaccination at Woodley Farm, near Romsey.

1802 Apr 25 Henry, Ld Viscount Palmerston, in the 75th year of his age. He was succeeded by his son, the future Prime Minister, as 3rd Viscount.

This same year, 1802, began the printed forms of Register for Baptisms and Burials similar to those already in use for Marriages. This was in consequence of an Act of Parliament of 1783. There is nothing to show why they had neglected to comply with the Act so long.

In these printed-form books there is little of interest to notice.

Bound into the end of the volume, however, there is a long French document; an account of the battle of Quiberon written by French Royalists who took part in it and who escaped to Portsmouth and Romsey, where their regiment had previously been in garrison. The report was deposited and transcribed into the Register of the Parish Church of Romsey, December 14, 1795.

This account deals with the disastrous expedition of June 1795, in which an army of some thousands of French Royalists collected in the South of England and the Channel Islands, conveyed in British ships, effected a landing on the Quiberon peninsula. They were attacked by the Republican army under Hoche and severely beaten. Some, like those who wrote this report, managed to get back to the British ships, but many were driven into the sea and the rest surrendered under a supposed promise of quarter, but about 800 of them were shot.

All the Registers in this volume end with the year 1812.

Of the thousands of names that appear in these Registers there are many that recur time after time and generation after generation. Some that occurred in the earliest volume are well known in Romsey to-day, but these are for the most part of only local interest.

The Registers contain few clues to the occupation and residence of those recorded. A certain amount of information as to the social standing is given by the occasional prefix 'Mr.' to those above the artisan class or of the suffix 'gent,' 'Generosus,' 'Armiger' or 'Esq.' to those of a slightly higher status. With the exception of the owners of Broadlands, there are none that would be ranked as nobility. Petty and Latham are the two names best known in literature.

It is not easy for the inquisitive, moralising antiquary to form a precise opinion as to the value of these records.

From a statistical standpoint, the irregularity and carelessness with which they were kept, often for long periods, prevent their having much value, and also the uncertainty whether, the baptisms at any rate, include the whole population.

From the point of view of their use for legal purposes there is no internal evidence of their having been used for this purpose.

To those interested in genealogy, there are signs that the Registers have been searched through many times by those who wish to learn something of their forebears. Pencil marks against certain names, a few cards left between the leaves in definite places, especially those of an American family who traced their origin to Romsey, show how this interest has been satisfied.

For the historical antiquarian, I hope a few points of interest have emerged, but one is left with a feeling of disappointment that among the recorders there were not more like Antony White with a sense of their opportunity to hand on invaluable points of historical interest.

These Registers were completely photographed by the Society of Genealogists in 1942.