

The Newport Chantry

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THE establishment of chantries was a popular expression of piety in the later Middle Ages, and, in the general history of the movement, the foundation at Newport comes quite late. At the outset it must be made quite clear that a chantry was not a building, but a benefice, an endowment for offering Mass for the soul of the founder. This form of religious foundation was well within the means of prosperous merchants and townsmen; it was not a reserve of the more wealthy. Here, at Newport, there is no sign of any special chapel for the 'chantry of John Garston and John White'. Of these co-founders John White is a very shadowy figure, whereas John Garston has left his name clearly on the local records of his time. It is not known what was the link between the two men.

Newport might well have been endowed with a second chantry, for Richard Morton of Winchester, by his will of 1504, left all his lands in Newport to his Wife Margaret . . . 'and after her decease the remaynder thereof to the parisshe church of Newport to the making and mayntenynge of a chauntry within the said parisshe church so that the said chauntry be made within the terme of viii yeres next after the day making of this my last will and testament'. It would seem then that Margaret survived her husband more than the stipulated eight years and that all the 'londes and tenementes', which might have endowed a chantry, became her property.¹

The earlier foundation had better success, though even here its erection was not made during the chief founder's lifetime. John Garston was apparently an Island man, though the name does not occur for any other member of his family; on the other hand we have Garston's Farm and Garston's Down in Gatcombe parish. There was a John Whyte of Newport who died on May 6, 1451 and whose death-bed repentance is given in a document among the borough records.² He appears as a man of some property, but nothing is said there which suggests that he may be the founder of the chantry. However, the death of this John Whyte occurs only two years after the establishment of the chantry and it is always possible that this unusual document survived in the borough archives precisely because it was a chantry document.

Fortunately, for Garston we are very much better documented. He seems to have been twice married; in 1396 he is the husband of Joan³, whereas in 1422 his wife is Elizabeth.⁴ Garston appears among the many who farmed out Quarr Abbey lands. In 1407 he took a lease of the lands of Arreton rectory, with the tithes of Arreton, Heasley, Combley, Staplers and Newnham, as well as a lease of the rabbits south of the road from Standen to Heasley, for twelve years at an inclusive rent of £34 6s. 8d.⁵ There is a receipt in the Carisbrooke Castle Museum (no. 66) for 11 marks rent for the rectory of Arreton received by the abbey from Garston. In the rent-rolls of the abbey his name appears for that rent⁶ with an additional

1. Somerset House, Canterbury Wills, Holgrave 21.

2. Hillier, *History of the I. Wight*, p. 7.

3. Hants. Record Office, Worsley docs., 16M48-75.

4. Public Record Office, E 315-42-225.

5. P.R.O., E 315-39-136.

6. P.R.O., S.C.6-987-8.

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13s. 4d. for rabbits in Combley⁷ and Arreton, as well as 6s. for crofts in 'Fordhille' near Newport⁸. Later in 1422 he and his wife Elizabeth took a lease of East Parson's Croft⁹ in Arreton (part of this is now the allotments) at a rent of 13s. 4d. The abbot of Quarr purchased a horse from Garston in 1430 for 23s. 4d., which evidently was a better beast than the one purchased in the same year from another man for 20s.¹⁰ Earlier we find him, between 1396 and 1420, leasing to Robert atte Watere, vicar of Arreton and others, lands in Fulford, Horringford, Frogland, Arreton, Alverstone, Adgestone, Newport, Yarmouth, Newchurch and elsewhere, but unfortunately no details of these well distributed lands have survived.¹¹ It is in this last connection that he is styled as of Arreton parish, and, if we are prepared to hazard a conclusion, we may note that the 1396 document is dated from Fulford.¹² Towards the end of his life we find him holding a tenement on the south side of Pile Street in Newport, though this does not prove that he resided there; it may well have been just part of the property destined for the chantry.¹³

All this detail serves to prove that he was a man of some wealth. His daughter and co-heir, Joan, married John Roucle (or Rookley) and it was undoubtedly on this occasion that the young man and his father-in-law are recorded as purchasers of Osborne¹⁴ in 1424. Their daughter, Joan Rookley, was to marry Thomas Bourman of Brook. Of the other heir nothing is known, but, in spite of marriage settlements, John Garston had wealth enough to join with John White in founding a chantry.

Documentary references to this do not begin before 1449. The entry in the Patent Rolls for Henry VI, dated Jan. 26 of that year and dated from Westminster, reads as follows:

'Whereas Neuport in the Isle of Wight is situated on the sea where many masters and mariners of ships winter in their passage to Aquitaine and Bordeaux in quest of wines and other merchandise, for safety, until a strong wind arise for their voyage, and in the town is a chapel of one chaplain who is engaged in divine service and the ministration of the sacraments night and day, because the chapel is far distant from the parish church of the town, which services and sacraments have not been celebrated and administered sometimes by the absence or infirmity of the chaplain and sometimes by his negligence and irregularity, and so masters and mariners and women labouring with child have perished without confession and the eucharist, and infants without baptism; and so one John Garston, deceased, late of Neuport, proposed to found a chantry in honour of the Virgin Mary of one chaplain to celebrate divine service daily and specially for such sacraments in the said chapel in the absence or infirmity of the other chaplain, which he could not accomplish owing to the shortness of his life, but left divers lands, rents, services and other possessions to Robert Parfite, clerk, John Vobe, clerk, Robert Virsey and John White for the foundation of the chantry and the sustenance of the chaplain:—the king has granted licence for them, and the heirs of the survivor of them, to found a chantry of one chaplain for the aforesaid purposes and to pray for the good estate of the king and queen, for their souls after death and the soul of John Garston, to be called the chantry of John Garston and John Whyte, the chaplain to be capable of acquiring lands, rents, services and other possessions and of

7. *ibid.*

8. *ibid.* and S.C.11-575.

9. P.R.O., E 315-39-136.

10. P.R.O., S.C.6-987-8.

11. Hants. R.O., Worsley Docs., 16M48-75 to 77.

12. *ibid.*, 16M48-75.

13. Winchester College Muniments, 3660.

14. V.C.H., Hants., V, p. 200.

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pleading and being impleaded in any court; licence also for him to acquire in mortmain possessions not held in chief by knight service to the value of 20 marks a year.¹⁵

From this document certain facts are quite clear. The main purpose of the foundation is rather to provide a second priest for the growing town of Newport. The mother church of Carisbrooke lay 1½ miles distant from its chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr. Garston had left the properties to his executors (among whom we may recognise the co-founder, John White, still living), with instructions to obtain the necessary permissions for the foundation.

In the Register of Bishop Waynesflete¹⁶, dated March 28 of the same year, 1449, we find an episcopal enquiry being held before licensing the establishment of the chantry. It recites the motives of Garston, explaining again that the endowment is sufficient for its maintenance. Enquiry was to be made about the provision of vestments and altar plate, as also about the chaplain's dwelling. Not least, the clerics and laymen of the commission were to make sure that the rights of the parish church and of its priest would not be prejudiced by the presence of a chantry priest using the same building.

Before the bishop had given his permission, the executors would naturally have been leasing out the properties. There is an indenture,¹⁷ dated June 26, 1448, in which the name of Garston does not appear, nor is there any mention of the chantry, but where ten men in all, including among those already named in the Patent Roll, John Vobe, John Haynes, Robert Parfite . . . Robert Virsey . . . and John White together lease to Nicholas Granger half a place in the eastern part of St. James Street.¹⁸ This must surely be a part of the property destined to become 'Chantry land'.

The Royal approbation of the chantry had given the chaplain licence to acquire lands in mortmain, i.e. lands which, by becoming church property, would cease to render services and other dues to the Crown or to the feudal lords. If a founder was able to prove that there would be sufficient funds to ensure the payment of these Crown and feudal dues, a licence to acquire under the 13c. Statute of Mortmain was duly granted. It was normal for a commission to be issued to the county sheriff, directing him to summon a jury to enquire into the request for a licence.¹⁹ This order was dated July 6, 1455, and the enquiry²⁰ was held at Newport on October 30 before Richard Chalcote, William Jervy of Shorwell, John Wyllier, Nicholas Graunger, John Reve, William atte Nasshe, John Tredynton, Walter Mudford, Richard Facy, Edward Brette and Richard Wylde. The properties, for which licence in view of the endowment was sought, consisted of 24 dwellings, 4 tofts, 2 stalls called 'Shamels', 22 gardens or orchards, 31 acres of land in Newport, Fairlee, Whippingham, East Standen and Shide, all in the Isle of Wight. They were to be conveyed to John Boynton, the first chaplain, for the chantry. The said dwellings, tofts, stalls and gardens were all declared to be held of the bailiffs of Newport, by a payment of 14s., being valued at 29s. 2d. per annum after charges had been met. Of the 31 acres of land, 30 lay in Fairlee, Whippingham and East Standen, being held of Henry, son and heir of Edward, duke of Somerset, by a payment of 6s. 8d. to cover all services, being worth 20s. a year. The remaining acre lay in Shide, being held of Sir John Popham at 1d. and bringing in 2d. per annum. The jury also declared that there remained another 3 dwellings and 3 gardens, held of the same bailiffs by a payment of 2s., leaving a balance of 40s. The property was declared to be sufficient to meet all customary dues.

15. *Cal. Patent Rolls*, Hen. VI, Vol. V, p. 244.

16. *Reg. Prima*, fo. 2x. Latin text in full in Stone, *Antiquities of the I.W.*, II, p. 156.

17. *Hants. R.O.*, 16M48-287.

18. One of the few early references to this street name.

19. *P.R.O.*, C 143-452-3.

20. *P.R.O.*, C 143-452-4.

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The acquisition of the land was now approved. It did not represent all the property they were entitled to acquire within their permit of 20 marks' worth and no doubt some items came later. For example, by his will²¹ in 1495, Simon Englissh left to his son Richard a tenement in Lugley Street, or failing him to the chantry of Newport. Unfortunately there are no inventories of these properties until after the suppression of the chantries, so that we cannot keep any check on this or any other subsequent acquisition or benefaction.

A chantry priest was an incumbent and was presented, instituted and inducted to his chantry like any other rector or vicar. There were many founders, who felt that such small foundations were more secure when left in the care of the local civil authorities and John Garston was among these. By chance there is preserved as a fly-leaf to the 16c. Borough Court Book in the Newport archives a contemporary copy of a document dated 9 June, 1532, by which the bailiffs of Newport, John Fleming and John Dore, ask for the canonical institution of Mark Pocok as chantry priest, on the death of William Lyster. The bailiffs assert that they are the lawful patrons of the benefice. Since the right of patronage belonged to the municipal authorities—and this in itself is comparatively rare—it is the more unfortunate that the town has not preserved any of the muniments of the chantry, its foundation charter, its account rolls or any evidence of how its property was managed. As regards the priest's residence, this was the Chantry House in Pile Street,²² as so many later documents make quite clear.

A certain number of the chantry priests are known to us from various sources, but especially from wills. John Boynton, the first, 1455, 1456/7, John Block, 1460/1, Thomas Clerk, 1483,²³ Thomas Cheke, 1495,²⁴ public notary, Thomas Clerke, 1502, public notary,²⁵ William Lister, d. 1532, Mark Pocok, pres. 1532, 1536, and finally John Glasier or Glasial, 1541 to the end, bachelor of law.²⁶ From these Isle of Wight wills we learn that the chantry priests witnessed, most probably also drew up wills, hence styled themselves public notaries. James Worsley²⁷ bequeathed 40s. to John Glasier for being his commissary in 1538 and he is named in the will of John Dyngley²⁸ of Swainston in the same year. In 1533 he had been presented to the chapel of St. Nicholas in Carisbrooke Castle.²⁹ After the suppression of the chantries he was in 1562 still living in London, the absentee rector of Whippingham, where his church was being 'servyd by a layman only in readinge the pistelles and gospelles with the procession.'³⁰ At the suppression the last incumbent was granted a pension of £6 13s. 4d., which was normal on an income of between £10 and £20. The Court of Augmentations paid Glasier this pension and we find his name in the lists for 1555³¹ and in the so-called list of Cardinal Pole.³² He had lived through all the changes in religion, had not married and died in 1563.³³

In 1545, owing to the financial needs of pursuing war against France, an Act was passed vesting all chantries in the Crown. Commissioners were sent to the counties (in pairs), to enquire how many chantries had already been dissolved or taken into other men's hands

21. Som. Ho., Vox 26.

22. Now the offices of the I.W. Rural District Council.

23. Block and Clerk are from Stone. *Antiquities*, without references.

24. Som. Ho., Vox 26.

25. *ibid.* Blamy 11.

26. *ibid.* Dyngely 1.

27. *ibid.* Dyngely 22.

28. *ibid.* Dyngely 1.

29. *Reg. Stephani Gardiner*, (Cant. and York Soc., 1930), p. 106.

30. P.R.O., S.P. Dom. Eliz. 7.

31. B. Museum. Add. Ms., 8102.,

32. P.R.O., E 164—Vol. 31.

33. *Proc. Hants. Field Club*, xiv, p. 79–80.

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since Feb. 4, 1536 without royal licence. The county of Southampton was linked to Berkshire, with Richard Worsley a member of the commission.

From the Isle of Wight certificate³⁴ we learn that the chantry of John Garston and John White was erected within the parish church of Newport; its annual value was £11 11s. 0d., from which the incumbent had to pay 3s. in dues; there were no vestments or plate belonging to the chantry, for the priest was accustomed to use those of the church.

Henry VIII died without having in fact seized the chantries; under Edward VI the Protector Somerset set himself to this task after the Act of 1547. The chantry lands were taken over by the Crown as from Easter, 1548. From this second certificate³⁵ we learn that the annual value is now reckoned as £11 17s. 8d. This time plate and vestments are declared to be in the custody of the chantry priest and of the value of £3 6s. 0d. The only reason advanced for maintaining the chantry in existence is that Newport is a town of 800 'housesing people', of communicants as we should say, and is a great resort for mariners. Education is not mentioned. The chantry priest, John Glasier, augments his living by the parsonage of Whippingham, which gives him an extra £10 a year.

Many of the chantry priests taught elementary grammar and writing to local boys. This is usually stated in this certificate (as it is at Godshill) and made the subject of a marginal note. Many chantry foundations managed to survive as grammar schools. For Newport there is no sign of this claim for special consideration, or of any survival. We ought, however, to state here that the will of Simon English³⁶ (21 Aug., 1495) is witnessed first by Thomas Cheke, chaplain of the chantry of Newport, public notary, and then by Barnard Sway, grammar master there (*ibidem*). At first sight this has the appearance of a chantry school, but the word 'there' must refer to Newport. Sway is not styled 'clerk'; there was only one chantry priest and we have no right to postulate a little school in which laymen assisted. After all, already in 1269 there was a 'magister scholarum' in Newport, receiving one quarter of wheat from Carisbrooke Castle for teaching the son of Roger le Harpur.³⁷

There remains now only the question of what were precisely the properties which made up the endowment of the chantry. These we know from the rent lists for the time that the property was in the hands of the Crown. There are two of these in particularly full detail, dated 1583³⁸ and 1608.³⁹ Of the 30 acres of land in Fairlee, Whippingham and E. Standen mentioned at the foundation, there is no further mention of E. Standen. For the one acre in Shide, we have references to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre in Shide, $\frac{1}{2}$ acre in Shidefield, one stitch on Shidedown (now Pan Down) and one meadow south of Shide Bridge. The remainder lies in Whippingham parish, 17 acres in the Tithing of Fairlee, viz. 14 ac. in Pan, 2 ac. in Morvenshull (Mornhill) and 1 ac. in 'Forthayes', with three closes in Fairlee; then 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ac. of copse with one close, one croft of 1 ac. near Chippars Well (Chipperwell) and another croft called 'Chippars Croft'; finally there are 2 acres in Whippingham, one near Broke Lane and the other near 'Le Haven' with $\frac{1}{2}$ acre unspecified. There is also mention, though once only, of pasture in Carisbrooke called 'Whiteley' and a toft called Little Pan.

The remaining property consisted of houses and gardens in Newport. A considerable number of these lay in Pile Street, where on the south side stood the Chantry House and where in the 1608 document there is mention of a barn. The only 'shoppe' ever to be named was in

34. P.R.O., E 301-51-2.

35. P.R.O., E 301-52-42.

36. Som. Ho., Vox 26.

37. P.R.O., S.C.6-984-2.

38. Cambr. Univ. Lib., Kk.v.5 (No. 2047), fo. 24.

39. P.R.O., E 178-7210.

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High Street. There was Chantry property in almost every street of the town, though the numbers of dwellings and gardens vary in the different documents. This may well be due to their bad state of repair during this period of decline of the town's prosperity. The distribution of the property can most conveniently be seen in the town Terrier of 1563,⁴⁰ where the chantry property accounts for no less than 26½ places by reason of its 41 holdings.

In the 1583 rent book the total revenue to the Crown from lands lately belonging to the chantry is given as £11 13s. 8d., very happily coinciding with the value given in the certificate of 1547. The rent on land outside Newport accounts for at least £3 12s. 0d. of this total sum. On the other hand the commission of enquiry into the poverty and decay of Newport led by Sir Francis Knollys in 1559 declared the chantry rents to be £9 15s. 5d., arising from 26 messuages, four of which decayed. Later in the same document the total revenue is stated to be £11 15s. 5d.⁴¹

When measures were being sought to remedy the decay of Newport, an appeal was made to Queen Elizabeth in 1559: 'Firste—if hit will please the Quenes highnes, of her excellent goodnes, to graunte the messuagis and lands of the chauntrie of Newporte—the patrons wherof were sometyme the bailives of her graces saide towne—to the sallarie or stipend of some good lerned man to be a scholemaster to brynge uppe yowthe in lerninge and vertewe.'⁴² But this appeal was not heard. Finally the properties of the Newport chantry were sold as petty items in a vast sale of lands as far distant as Northumberland and York to Francis Morris and Francis Phelipps in 1609. These properties are not detailed in the Patent Roll.⁴³ That much passed into the possession of Sir Thomas Fleming, Lord Chief Justice, is clear from the Inquisition into his property after his death.⁴⁴ But whereas the chantry had possessed 41 holdings, Sir Thomas is there said to have held seven messuages only, and 'the Olde Barne'. It was the son of the Lord Chief Justice, also Sir Thomas, who with John Erlesman no doubt as co-executors, granted to the citizens of Newport in 1617 for their grammar school: the Chantry House in Pile Street, the ½ acre of Shideford and the tenement on the south side of Lugley Street.⁴⁵

One is obliged to conclude that in the Isle of Wight, as so frequently elsewhere, very little of the chantry possessions passed on to endow any educational establishment, and none directly.

40. *Proc. Hants. Field Club*, xix, Part 3, p. 227.

41. Hillier, *History of I.W.*, p. 14. (The discrepancy may well be a misreading.)

42. *ibid.* p. 16.

43. P.R.O., C 66-1798, m. 9.

44. P.R.O., C 142-337-105 and 137.

45. P. W. F. Brith, *Hist. Newport Grammar School*, 1950, p. 17.