

Shepey Monastery,

OR

Le Minstre in Shepey,

KENT.



EXBURG, or Sexburga, widow to Ercombert king of Kent and mother of King Egbert, obtained land of her son in the Isle of Shepey, whereon to found a monastery, which she finished, and got well endowed for seventy-seven nuns, about the year 675.^a

SEXBURGA herself was the first abbess. She is said to have resigned her government within a short time of the foundation; and to have retired to Ely, where she afterwards succeeded her sister Etheldreda as abbess.^b

ERMENILDA, queen dowager of Mercia, and daughter of Sexburga, succeeded her mother as abbess of Shepey.^c

The religious suffered much here during the invasions of the Danes, by whom the monastery was at last in a great measure destroyed, and the nuns dispersed.

In this situation, according to Hasted, the edifice remained till the latter part of the reign of William the Conqueror, who, on the prioress of the nunnery of Newington, near Sittingbourne, having been strangled in her bed, confiscated the possessions of that convent, and removed the few remaining nuns from thence to this ruined monastery of Shepey; which continued but in a mean condition till the year 1130, when it was re-edified and replenished with Benedictine nuns by William Corboil archbishop of Canterbury, and dedicated to St. Mary and St. Sexburgh.^d

King Henry the Third, in his eighteenth year, confirmed to the prioress and nuns of this monastery the site of it and its appurtenances, together with the manor of Minster and all other lands and possessions, and divers liberties and privileges, as therein mentioned. Which charter was again confirmed by King Edward the Third, in his third year; who likewise afterwards, in the same year, granted to them an ample charter of confirmation of all their lands and privileges;^e and the grant of King Henry III. above-mentioned was likewise

again confirmed by King Richard II. in the fourth year of his reign, and afterwards a third time by letters of *inspeximus* from King Henry IV. in his first year.^f

A. D. 1186. Roger abbat of St. Augustine demised to AGNES prioress of St. Sexburg certain tithes which his monastery possessed, in right of the church of Middleton, in the parish of Bobbing, at the yearly rent of ten shillings, on condition that all housekeepers which should be on the estates from which those tithes arose, whether they were married or not, should yearly repair to the mother church of Middleton, with their oblations, according to their several abilities, viz. on Christmas-day, the day of the Purification, and on Easter-day; and when there should not be any men, then the widows or damsels, if any such should be, should repair to the said church, in like manner, in lieu of them. And, in 1188, the same abbat demised to the prioress above-mentioned the tithes of Westlonde, within the parish of the said prioress, for the rent of fourteen shillings sterling, payable yearly to the sacrist of St. Augustine.^g

A complete list of the names of the abbesses of Shepey is probably now irrecoverable. The obits of the following are preserved in an ancient Calendar in the Cotton manuscript Faustina B. vi.

“ 2 Id. Martii, obiit JOHANNA DE BADELISMERE priorissa de Scapeya.”

“ 12 Kal. Maii, ob. EUSTACHIA priorissa de Scapiea.”

“ 4 Non. Oct. ob. AGNES^h priorissa de Scapiea.”

“ 13 Kal. Oct. ob. CHRISTINA priorissa de Scapa.”

“ 11 Kal. Dec. ob. GUNNORA priorissa de Scapeya.”

AGNES REVERS is noticed as prioress, Oct. 2d, 1511, from the Archiepiscopal Registers at Lambeth, in one of Mr. Cole's manuscripts.ⁱ

In the eighth year of King Richard the Second, anno 1384, the temporalities of this monastery were valued at 66*l.* 8*s.* and the spiritualities at 73*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* Total, 139*l.* 14*s.* 8*d.*^k

This monastery was suppressed in the 27th of Henry the Eighth; its annual revenues, according to Dugdale, amounting to 129*l.* 7*s.* 10½*d.*; but according to Speed, corroborated by the Valor Ecclesiasticus of King Henry VIII., to 122*l.* 14*s.* 6½*d.*^l

The revenues had decreased, from time to time, so

^a Tann. Not. Mon. Kent, liv., Leland, Collect. vol. i. p. 89, Speed, &c. make Sexburgh to have founded this place A. D. 710, which is too late; it being plain from the Monasticon, &c. that it was begun before the death of King Egbert, in A. D. 673, and finished before her going to Ely, where she was sometime before the death of St. Etheldred, in A. D. 679. A monastery here is also mentioned in the Acts of the Council of Beccaneld, A. D. 694. Tann. ut supr. Dugdale, in the former editions of the first volume of this work, p. 152, following the same authorities with Leland and Speed, says: “ De hujus cœnobii fundatione, et fundationis tempore, vide Lambardi Itiner. Cantii, et Cambdeni Britanniam, qui fundatum asserunt per reginam quandam Sexburgam nomine, circa annum Domini 710. Vide etiam supra pag. 88, col. 1 et 2.” Lives of St. Sexburgh occur, MSS. Cotton. Calig. A. viii. fol. 89 b, 104; Claud. A. viii. fol. 126 b.

VOL. II.

^b Compare vol. i. pp. 457, 458. See also Thomæ Eliensis Hist. Eliensis; Wharton, Angl. Sacr. tom. i. pp. 595, 596.

^c Tho. Elien. ut supr. Angl. Sacr. tom. i. p. 596.

^d Hasted, Hist. of Kent, vol. ii. pp. 550, 648. No traces of this monastery occur in the Domesday Survey of Kent.

^e Rot. Cart. anno 3 Edw. III. num. 38, 48.

^f See Num. II.

^g Chron. W. Thorn, ut supr. col. 1839. Hasted, vol. ii. p. 633.

^h Probably the same with the Agnes mentioned above in the year 1186.

ⁱ MS. Cole, Brit. Mus. vol. xxvi. fol. 201 b.

^k Stevens, Contin. of Dugd. vol. i. p. 41. From Chron. W. Thorn, de rebus gestis Abbatum Sancti Augustini Cantuarie, Twysd. Script. x. col. 2168.

^l See Tann. Notit. Mon. and Valor Eccl. vol. i. p. 98.

much, that at the Dissolution there were but ten nuns beside the prioress in it.

To the last prioress, ALICIA CRANE, King Henry the Eighth, on Nov. 20th in his 28th year, granted a pension of 14*l.* for her life, towards her proper support and maintenance.^a

The manor of Minstre, alias Sexburg, with the site of the priory, was granted, Nov. 12th, 29 Hen. VIII., to Sir Thomas Cheney, Knight.^b

The present church of Minster, being dedicated to St. Mary and St. Sexburg, as was the monastery, is supposed by some to have been the very church of it; but,

by others, that it only adjoined to it. Hasted states, that it formed part of the endowment of the monastery at its first foundation.^c Weever, speaking of this monastery, says, "Some part of it is now converted into a parish-church."^d

Beside the possessions already noticed, the nunnery of Shepey was possessed, in the 22d of King Edward the Third, of lands in Milton.^e

William Robesart, by his last will, proved August 19th, 1499, gave the manor of Pistock, alias Woodstock, in Tunstall to this monastery, for the use of a solemn obit.^f

Cartae ad Scapeiense Coenobium in agro Cantiano spectantes.

NUM. I.

Shepey-moynstre, Monialium Abbatia.

[Lelandi Collectan. vol. i. p. 84.]

GULIELMUS archiepiscopus Cantuar. restituit, post conquestum, monasterium longo ante tempore à Danis combustum. Ecclesia de Greine approp.

NUM. II.

Charta Henrici Regis IIII. Chartas et Donationes Monialibus olim concessas, vel imposterum concedendas, confirmans.

[Pat. 1 Hen. IV. p. 8, m. 8.]

REX omnibus ad quos &c. Salutem &c. Inspecimus Cartam quam celebris memoriae dominus H. quondam rex Angliæ, proavus noster fecit in hæc verba. Henricus Dei gratia rex Angliæ, dominus Hiberniæ, dux Normanniæ et Aquitaniæ et comes Andegaviæ, archiepiscopis, episcopis, abbatibus, prioribus, comitibus, baronibus, justiciariis, vicecomitibus, præpositis, ministris, et omnibus ballivis et fidelibus suis salutem. Sciatis nos concessisse, et hac carta nostra confirmasse, intuitu Dei, et pro salute animæ nostræ et animarum antecessorum et hæredum nostrorum, ecclesiæ sanctæ Mariæ, et sanctæ Sexburgæ de Scapeya, et sanctimonialibus ibidem Deo servientibus, in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam, locum suum in Scapeya et ecclesiam sanctæ Mariæ et sanctæ Sexburgæ, cum omnibus pertinentiis, et ecclesiam de Gillingham cum capellis et decimis et omnibus pertinentiis, et terras in insula de Gryen quas Willielmus Cantuar. archiepiscopus eis dedit de emptione sua, cum mariscis et omnibus pertinentiis, et dimidium sulingum terræ de feodo Ricardi de Lucy ex acquisitione ejusdem Willielmi archiepiscopi per Avelinam matrem præfati Ricardi de Lucy, de Newenthon, et terram de Rypen, in insula de Scapeya, et in insula de Gryen redditus sex librarum quas prædictus archiepiscopus mercatus est de ipsis hæredibus; salvis consuetudinibus curiæ de Gillingham: et terram de Bradefeld, quam idem archiepiscopus mercatus est ab Aldina et Ordina et hæredibus suis. Concedimus etiam eis ecclesiam de Bobbing cum pertinentiis, et terram de Wode, scilicet quadraginta septem acras et tres acras et dimidiam de Grave in Pinnegrave, ex dono Willielmi de Ros, et terram de Holte quam Goher tenuit, scilicet triginta et unam

acram, et in Godmefeld septem acras, et triginta et duas acras memoris in Kyngesdun, quas habent ex dono H. regis avi nostri: et terram quam receperunt cum filiabus Goscel in marisco de Leffledhop, pasturam etiam sexaginta ovium quam Osbertus de Borden dedit eis cum uxore sua et filia; et terram de Estlanda quam Avelina femina Hardingi dedit quando sanctimonialis facta est, et in insula de Gryen redditus quindecim solidorum et quatuor denariorum, quos Galfridus de Ros dedit cum filia sua: mariscum qui adjacet novo portui quem Radulfus de Swynesheth dedit cum aliis terris quas parochiani in dotem dederunt quando ecclesia dedicata fuit; dimidiam terram et dimidium mariscum de Sedun. cum sorore Henrici de Hores, terram quam ipsæ sanctimoniales emerunt de Osberto Rasum et Alditha amita ejus, terram etiam de Milstede quam emerunt de Elrico Gosesune et Edwardo Maynard et aliis hæredibus; terram de Bordenfeld quam Osbertus de Wardun dedit cum filia sua: terram Wynæ, terram Godardi de Cumbes, et septem solidos de Dunton, quos Hugo de Ginges dedit cum Agnete filia sua, et totum essartum quod habuit in Northwod cum pertinentiis, et omnes alias terras et tenementa et homines et possessiones suas, secundum cartas rationabiles vel cirographa donatorum vel venditorum vel ex-cambitorum suorum. Quare volumus et firmiter præcipimus, quod prænominatæ sanctimoniales præfatas ecclesias cum capellis et cæteris pertinentiis et omnes terras et homines et possessiones suas habeant et teneant liberè et quietè integrè et plenariè in liberam elemosinam, et quæcunque alia in futuro pia devotione fidelium vel conventionis venditorum illis de cujuscumque feodo fuerint rationabiliter collata, cum omnibus pertinentiis et libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus, in terris, et in escambiis, et emptionibus terrarum, in mariscis, in grangiis, et virgultis, in civitatibus, et villis, stagnis, piscariis, in bosco et plano, in pratis et pascuis, in aquis et molendinis, in viis et semitis, et in omnibus aliis locis et rebus cum soca et saca et thol et theam et infangene-thef, soluta et libera ab omni sæculari servitio, salvis conventionibus erga universos secundum rationabiles cartas vel cirographa sua. Et quieti sint de sectis comitatum, Leth. Hundred. et auxiliis vicecomitum et omnium ministrorum eorum, et de omnibus ad eos pertinentibus. Prohibemus etiam, quod nullus eas aut possessiones aut homines aut res suas vexet vel disturbet contra libertates cartarum suarum super decem librarum forisfactura, sicut carta Ricardi regis avunculi nostri,

^a Hasted, vol. ii. p. 648.

^c Hasted, vol. ii. p. 653.

^d Fun. Mon. edit. 1631, p. 283.

^e Hasted, vol. ii. p. 629. Tann. Not. Mon.

^b Tann. Not. Mon.

^f Hasted, vol. ii. p. 580. This manor was also granted in the 29th Hen. VIII. to Sir Thomas Cheney. See More's Hist of Tunstall, Bibl. Top. Brit. p. 42.

^g Ita MS.

quam inde habent, rationabiliter testatur. Hiis testibus
L. de Segrave justic. Angl. J. comite Linc. et constab.
Cestrie W. comite Albermarl. Phillippo de Albuniaco,
Briano de Insula, Petro de Malolaco, Radulfo fil. Nichol.

Godefr. de Crancumb. Galfr. Dispenser, et aliis. Dat.
per manum venerab. patris R. Cicestr. episcopi Canc.
nostri apud Roffam, vii. die Aprilis anno regni nostri
xviii. Nos autem, &c.

VALOR ECCLESIASTICUS TEMP. HEN. VIII.

(Abstract of Return, 26 Hen. VIII. First Fruits Office.)

MONASTEREY OF SAYNT SEXBURGE WITHIN THE YLE OF SHEPEY.

	£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
The Manor of Upberge	18	14	11½	The Farme of Rede	5	13	4
The Parsonage of Gyllyngham	10	12	0	Sundry Tenements in Eastbregge and within the walls of the City of Canter- bury	2	19	8
The Parsonage of Greyn	10	8	9	Rents of Kylborne	0	5	0
The Parsonage of Bobbyng	10	9	10	Rents of certain Lands in Grane	4	0	0
The Manor of Pyscocke in Rodmersham	7	13	9	Rents of certain Lands in Bobbyng	0	1	4
The Manor of Mynster	62	10	8	Rents of certain Lands in Newyngton	0	1	4
The Parsonage of Mynster	18	15	9	Rents of certain Lands in Sydyngborne	0	1	8
The Chappell of Quinburghe	1	6	8				
The Rent and Farme of Swal and Talnasse	7	0	0				
Sum clear, beyond deductions,				156l. 1s. 0½d.			

COMPUT' MINISTRORUM DOMINI REGIS TEMP. HEN. VIII.

(Abstract of Roll, 29 Hen. VIII. Augmentation Office.)

MONASTERIUM SANCTÆ SEXBURG' IN INSULA DE SHEPEY.

Com' Canc'		£.	s.	d.
Upbury	Firma Manerij	16	16	0
- - - - -	Firma Rectoriæ	13	6	8
- - - - -	Reddit' Assis'	2	5	7½
- - - - -	Pecia Terræ	0	3	0
Pistock	Firma Manerij	10	9	5½
Le Mynster	Dominium	25	0	10½
Swal et Talnash	Redd' et Firm' ibm	7	0	0
Reade	Firma ibm	5	13	4
Mynster	Molend' Ventritic'	1	6	8
Civit' Cantuar'	Diversa Tenementa	1	3	4
Grene	Rectoria	13	13	4
Bobbing	Rectoria	12	0	0
Mynster	Firma Terrarum Dominicalium	39	14	0
Grymborowe et Walathorp	Marisc' sic vocat' in Insula de Shepey	3	6	8
Mynster	Rectoria	13	6	8