

## SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S PRIORY, SUDBURY.

The traveller to or from Sudbury, by the high road to Bury S. Edmund's, will probably notice on the north side, on rising ground, about a quarter of a mile from the highway, a picturesque, ivy-clad, grey building of an ecclesiastical character, and near by, a gabled farmhouse, or "Grange," with extensive outbuildings; the whole partially shrouded by venerable trees. This is the site of an ancient subordinate Priory of Benedictine monks, and the buttressed stone building, with western gable clothed with luxuriant ivy, was their chapel, which for many years has been diverted from religious purposes, and used as a granary, or barn. The spot is an elevated one, and the view from the precincts is diversified and pleasing. As the tourist carefully wends his way down the steep and rugged Devonian-like green lane, between high honey-combed and flower bedecked banks, and beneath the over-arching branches of oaks, elms, and ashes—known, in mediæval days, as the "Procession-way"—he will see below him the "Colney" cottages, occupying the site of the Leper Hospital, dedicated to S. Leonard, founded by John Colney in the reign of Edward III., whose foundation was enlarged and rules amended by Archbishop Simon Theobald, of Sudbury, in the time of Richard II. A short distance further, on the high road so often traversed by ranks of regal and noble pilgrims in olden days bound for the famous shrine of S. Edmund, is the "Holgate," situated within the borough, repeatedly mentioned in early documents. And opposite are stretched out several of the "Commons," which partly surround the town, the gift of the Lords of Clare and other patrons, where the free burgesses have depastured their cattle from time immemorial. Beyond the serpentine Stour and the plashing waterfall, can be seen Brunton Hall, Mill, and Wood, mentioned in Domesday, the latter with "20 swine," but the "brown hill" (as the Saxon name implies) is now cultivated, the wood greatly

diminished, and the parish church, of only "one pace with the chancel," a thing of the past; church and churchyard having long since been swept away, and all traces thereof obliterated. The monks of S. Benedict were located in a very pleasant spot, amidst historic surroundings, and they had for their near neighbour the lord or squire of "Woodehall," then a fine mansion, approached through a wide avenue of "patriarchal trees," with an extensive wood in the background. This domain is frequently named in old records in connection with "*ville de Subere*," and at one time was part of the patrimony of the beautiful, but unfortunate, Queen Anne Boleyn.

But this sketch has more particularly to do with S. Bartholomew's, and its history, which has never yet been written. Briefly it is as follows. It appears from Tanner, in his "*Notitia Monastica*," that "Wolfricus (or Wulfric), Moneyer to Henry II., gave the church or chapel of S. Bartholomew, Sudbury, to the Abbey of Westminster, whereupon a Priory of Benedictine Monks, and Cell to that Abbey was here fixed," which continued till the Dissolution.

Like many others elsewhere, the principal Sudbury ecclesiastical and religious buildings, belonged to non-residents, who received the greater part of the revenues, and performed the duties by deputy. Thus S. Gregory's church belonged to the Nuns of Eaton, and All Saints, or "All Souls," to S. Alban's Abbey. The original gift or grant of the Priory is, probably, in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, with about a score of other documents relating to their former property. A Charter of Confirmation (in the Faustinas MSS. at British Museum) was granted about 1130, by Henry I., and another by his grandson in 1156. The first Charter reads as under (translated):—

"Henry, King of England, to Herbert, Bishop of Norwich, and Haymur his Steward, and to the Burgesses of Sudbury, and to all his Ministers and Faithful Subjects, French and English, of Suffolk, send Greeting. Know ye that I have granted to God and S. Peter, and the

Monastery of Westminster, for the Redemption of my Soul, the Church of St. Bartholomew's de Sudbury, which Wolfricus, my Monier, had given for the use of the Monks serving there, for the Fraternity and Monkhood which he had taken upon him there, whereof I will and firmly command that they shall hereafter hold the same well and quietly, and honorably and freely, and without any challenge and disquietude, with the Lands and Tithes, with Sack and Soke, and Toll and Theme, and Theftwhite, and with all Things and Customs and Laws as fully and freely as at any time they hold the same, as the same was quiet claimed in my Court before my Barons, &c."

Among the same MSS. is a Confirmation by Henry II. (1156), of two parts of the Tithes of Thorpe, given by Ivo to the Priory, in these words :—

"Know ye that I grant and confirm to God and S. Bartholomew's, and the Monks of Sudbury, two parts of the Tithe of Thorp."

In or about the following year (1157) occurs another mention of the Priory, in the second Bull of Pope Adrian IV., which confirms the grant to the Abbey of Westminster of the "Cell of S. Bartholomew de Sudbury, with all obedience, and subjection to the church of S. Gregory in the same Town, and with all things thereto belonging." (This is found in the same MSS.)

According to the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV. in 1291, this small Priory had the following with other property in the Deanery of Sudbury.

	£	s.	d.
"The Parish of S. Peter's in Sudbury	}	4	2
"The Priory of S. Bartholomew's in Rents			
"The Parish of S. Gregory's in Sudbury			
"Priory of S. Bartholomew's in Lands			
Rents and Young of Animals	3	3	4

In 1362, in the 35th of Edward III., a Licence was granted to Richard Roke, of Westminster (see *Dugdale*), in the following words :—

"To all to whom these Presents shall come the King send greeting. Know ye that by our Letters Patent we lately granted Licence for us and our heirs, as much as in us was, to our dearly beloved in Christ the Abbot and Convent of Westminster, that they might purchase Lands, Tenements, and Rents, to the value of Ten Marks Per Ann. as well of

their own as of another's Fee, except the Lands, Tenements, and Rents which were held of us in Capite, To have and to hold to them, and their Successors for ever for the support of their Poor Chapel of S. Bartholomew's near Sudbury, the Statute of Mortmain notwithstanding, as is more fully contained; We, being willing to render the aforesaid Grant more ample and effectual have given Licence for us and our heirs, as much as in us lies, to Richard Roke of the City of Westminster, Senr., that he may give and assign to the aforesaid Abbot and Convent 76½ acres of Land and 3½ acres of Meadow, in Sudbury and Holgate, which are not held of us, and which are worth per ann. at all events near the true value thereof, over the Services thereof, due and accustomed, 28/-, as is found upon an Inquisition thereof made by our beloved Roger Wolfreton, our Escheator in the County of Suffolk."

In the "*Calendarium Inquisitionem Post Mortem siue Eschaetarium*" this Inquisition is given (Vol. II., p. 227, 2nd No. 21) "34 Ed. III. Ricūs Rook Senr"

"pro Abbe et Conventu Westmonaster.

"Sudbury & Hologate. 76 ac' terr' &c. Suffolk."

By an Inquisition taken at Clare in the 3rd year of Henry VI., by virtue of a Writ directed to Wm. Drury, and upon the oaths of Twelve Jurors, they found that Edmund, Earl of March, held on the day he died in his demesne as of fee (*inter alia*):—

"The Town of Sudbury and the Manor of Woodhall, Sudbury; 800 acres of Arable Land, value per annum, £10, at 3d. per acre; 21 acres of Meadow Land, 40/6, at 2/6 per acre; 32 acres of Pasture Land, 16/-, at 6d. per acre; 31 acres of Underwood (of which 7 ac 3½ roods may be cut every sixth year) of the value of 12d. more or less."

Although in this Inquisition, S. Bartholomew's is not mentioned by name, the acreage here given corresponds with the acreage of the borough, including that portion of the Priory property not extra-parochial.

In the General Ecclesiastical Survey, 26th of Henry VIII., there are these notes under the head of "Westminster:"

	£	s.	d.
"Value in the Priory of St. Bartholomew Juxta Sudbury,	10	0	0
recognized by the Lord Abbot of the aforesaid Monastery}			

In the 31st of Henry VIII. the Monastery was surrendered to the Crown, and re-granted in the 34th year of the same Sovereign, and the possession of this cell was

made part of the endowment of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

The Priory was pulled down in 1779, but the Chapel remains in good preservation, and could, at a comparatively small cost, be made available again for Divine service. It is an early Perpendicular building, without chancel, aisles, or tower. The roof is high pitched, with the timbers framed in cants; the eastern part is lined with boarding. It is 53 ft. long and 19 ft. broad, height to wall-plate 17 ft., ditto to ridge 30 ft. Till about 60 years ago, a service was held here once a year by direction of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and was generally conducted by the Vicar of All Saints, Sudbury.

S. Bartholomew's Farm forms a parish by itself, and returns a Guardian to the Sudbury Union. It is now the property of G. P. Weybrew, Esq., who resides here, and returns himself as "Guardian" for his household, who are the only parishioners. Besides the land situate in the Borough the farm contains about 145 acres of "extra-parochial" land belonging to Melford, the whole acreage being 246. It is very irregular in extent, though several exchanges have been made to make the farm more compact. Several of the fields, almost enclosed by the estate, formerly belonged to Sudbury College, and a long, narrow plot to S. Sepulchre's Chapel, Sudbury." An old map (1656) has this title—"A Description of S. Bartholomew's Priory, w<sup>th</sup> the Lands belonging thereunto, lyeing neare Sudbury in the County of Suffolk, containing 180 acres, 1 rood, 33 perches, herein particularly Described in the year of our Lord God 1656, by John Coffyn."

The following are the names of the several Fields:—Great Acton Field, Little Acton ditto, Little Fuzzy ditto, Hickmore, King's Wood, Pond Field, Rye Hills, Barne Pittle (or Pightle, or Pikle), King's Wood Hill, Great Faire Field, Little ditto, Dove House Field, Knave's Acre, Two-acre Piece in y<sup>e</sup> Colnes, Bartholomew, Colnes Piece, Three-rood Piece, Battle-dore Piece, S. Bartholomew's Field, or Eleven-acre, Six-acre, Three-acre Piece, Seven acres, Round 6 acres, Four-acre Piece, Upper 3 acres, Two acres, Fuzzy Field, Pope's Wood, Bar Mead and plots on Lulham Meadow, ditto on North Meadow.

Several cottages and gardens (now pulled down) are shown, and the "Scit of the house with the yards and gardens" are stated to contain 14 acres 1 rood. Several of the pieces near "the Colneys" are what are locally known as "Half-year lands," the free burgesses having the right of shackle, or depasturing cattle, on them immediately after harvest from Old Bartholomew's to Old Candlemas, 5th of September to 14th of February. An annual sum is now paid by Mr. Weybrew as commutation in lieu of the right being exercised. A large quantity of land in the suburbs of the town was formerly in the same position, till the redemption of the shackle by the several owners in 1863.

In 1832 there was a lengthened dispute between the Borough Rating Authority and the owners of the "Bartemus" (as the place is provincially called by many of the natives) as to the liability of the messuage and farm being assessed to the poor rate, and the case ("Burton, Underwood, Comp<sup>t</sup>, and Anthony Sparrow, Def.") was tried in the Court of Exchequer, when judgment was given for the Court of Guardians in favour of the town.

Bernard Barton, the Woodbridge Quaker poet, indited some appropriate verses on the ancient Bartholomew Chapel, where the followers of S. Benedict for so many years worshipped; an extract from which may appropriately close this descriptive monograph.

Turn not thou in pride aloof,  
From this simple, lowly roof,  
Still let memory's hallowed spell  
Save from scorn the Saints' Chapelle.

Humble as it now appears,  
Yet its floor, in bye-gone years,  
Has by worshippers been trod,  
Gather'd there to praise their God.

Even now, though 'tis but rare,  
Intervals of praise and prayer,  
Which recall its former use,  
Should redeem it from abuse.

Where Religion's holy name  
Hath preferred its sacred claim,  
While a relic can be found,  
Count it still as hallowed ground.