

## SUFFOLK LIMITERS.

BY LILIAN J. REDSTONE.

It is easy to picture the concern with which the Austin friars of Clare heard that John of Gaunt intended to set up a new house of *their* Order at Thetford on the very edge of Suffolk. They were begging friars, or "limiters," going about within a well-defined districts or "limitations." The convent at Clare had all the prestige of an ancient foundation, for it dated from 1248 and was the first house of the kind to be founded in England. Moreover, it had royal patronage and in its church there lay a daughter of Edward I, Joan of Acre, and a son of Edward III, Lionel duke of Clarence. Its friars, in their white habits and black cloaks, had been visiting all the villages of West Suffolk for nearly a hundred and forty years, when they were called upon to surrender to the new establishment the parishes which bordered upon Thetford.

The Provincial Chapter ordered that an agreement between the two priories should be drawn up in writing, when Thomas Winterton, the Provincial Prior, who was head of the Austin Priory at Stamford in Lincolnshire, should next come into the neighbourhood of Suffolk.

No. 1 of the records translated below is Winterton's letter to Prior John and the Convent of Clare, enjoining them upon their obedience to fulfil the order of the chapter. The letter was dated 16 September, 1388. It was written at Cambridge, where Winterton

was attending the Parliament, which met on 9 September and was dissolved on 17 October of that year.<sup>(a)</sup>

He commands the friars of Clare either to let him have within eight days a list of the parishes with a note of the arrangements made, or within six days to send a duly authorised proctor with the same list. Which method they pursued is not clear ; but by 26 September an agreement between Thetford and Clare had been executed with the assent of Winterton. This agreement is the second of the records translated below.

The list of forty-seven parishes to be handed over to the new comers may have impressed a stranger to the county like Winterton ; or perhaps his hostility towards John Wycliffe extended to Wycliffe's patron John of Gaunt, the founder of Thetford Priory. It is in either case remarkable that the surrendered parishes included no town of any size. They were all small villages stretching from the northern borders of Bury (Great Barton, the Fornhams and Hengrave) towards the immediate neighbourhood of Thetford (Barnham, Elvedon and Coney Weston).

Records 3 and 4 transcribed below show the Suffolk villages which were left to the friars of Clare, and were divided into two limitations, the one of Bury, the other of Lavenham. The towns marked with an asterisk in the Bury limitation are distinguished by a mark in the original cartulary of Clare Priory. They lie together and it may have been intended that they should be formed into a separate limitation round Haverhill and Glemsford. This limitation of Bury is arranged alphabetically ; the Lavenham limitation has an interesting topographical arrangement, which is shown on the accompanying reproduction from one

<sup>(a)</sup>This was not the "Merciless" Parliament of that year, but a shorter Parliament concerned chiefly with domestic legislation.

page of the cartulary. It seems possible that each line represents the places which could be visited in a single day. One day would then be spent at Lavenham and Alpheton, one in Preston, Brent Eleigh and Kettlebaston; then on to Brettenham and Thorpe Morieux; then back to Bildeston and Nedging; and so on until the limiter returns to his centre at Lavenham by way of the Bradfields, Felsham and Rattlesden.

These are the only Suffolk limitations described in detail in the cartulary of Clare Priory. There was a limitation of Sudbury, but the villages in it are omitted from the cartulary (see f. 62). The friars of Clare also went far into Essex. In 1373 they had portioned out the Isle of Mersea with the priory of Orford, whose friars with those of Gorleston must also have visited the East Suffolk villages. The Essex limitations which were visited from Clare lay about Finchingfield, Braintree and Halstead, and included the distant hundreds of Dengey and Rochford.(b)

[No. 1.]

*Translation of the Letter from the Provincial Prior to the Convent of Clare.(c)*

Frere Thomas, Provincial Prior of the Order of Hermit Friars of St. Augustine of the Province of England, to his beloved in Christ, Frere John, Prior of the convent of Clare of the same Order, and to the vènerable masters and others of the brotherhood of the said convent, greeting with peace! Because it belongs to the office of a provincial to be duly entrusted with the execution of the ordinance of a provincial chapter, and [because] the last provincial chapter

(b) These Essex limitations are described on folios 61b, 64b, 65 and 65b of the Cartulary (Harl. MS. 4835).

(c) Harl. MS. 4835 f. 54.

ordained and commanded us upon [our] obedience, that upon my coming to your parts ye should define together with the convent of Thetford, your limitations lying over against the same town of Thetford, and that you should put what you say into writing; wherefore, being now at Cambridge for the duration of Parliament, I command you upon your salutary obedience that ye perform the aforementioned ordinance by defining reasonably the limitation aforesaid, in accordance with the law and customs of the Order, within twenty days of [this] present notification, and that ye should take care to inform me within eight days thereafter of your arrangement[s] and ordinance[s] in this business, together with the names of all the parochial townships within the aforementioned limitation, or [that] within six days of the sending of [these] presents ye send one of your brethren [as] proctor having sufficient power to define the said limitation in your name, and to make agreement with the said convent, and he shall bring with him the names of all the parochial townships in the said limitation, as is above mentioned.

Given at Cambridge on the sixteenth day of September, under my official seal, in the year of Our Lord 1388.

[No. 2,]

*Translation of the Agreement between the Priories of Clare and Thetford.*(d)

This indenture made between the Prior and Convent of Clare, of the Order of Eremites of St. Augustine, on the one part, and the Prior [and] Convent of Thetford of the same [Order] on the other part, witnesses that the Prior and Convent of Clare have granted for themselves and their successors [that] the following

(d)Ibid.

towns [which] were formerly selected for their alms-begging, should belong to the Prior and Convent of Thetford of the same Order ; so that they shall henceforward belong to them for the like purpose quietly and peaceably without gainsay on the part of the Convent of Clare : to wit berton' by byri, pakenam, cauenam, Tudynham, Ikligam, Westowe, Fornam-geneuer, fornam martyn, Writwell, berton' by myldenale, culforth', tymWorhth, eringewell [i.e. Herringswell], lacforth, flemtom, hemgrave, ingham, leuermer magna, lyuermer' parua, troston [i.e. Thurston], Ikysworthe, langham, Stokelangtot, huntyston', badwelle, Wynerston, bacton, Walsam, hyndacle, Watlisfeld, riklyngale, thelftham, hoptone, knatesale, Weston', hep worthe, stanton, beryngham [i.e. Barningham], canston [i.e. Coney Weston], berdwelle, thorpe, honigton, sapston', fakenham and fakenham euston', bernam, elueden ; but yet that persons already in religious orders within the region of the said townships should remain to the Convent of Clare together with their goods, unless before the next provincial chapter another person of their number shall be lacking, by choosing the convent of Thetford for the convent of his origin. And the Prior and Convent of Thetford have agreed to the aforementioned definition of the limitation as to an agreement for themselves and their successors, renouncing all right and claim in future as to appropriation and alms-begging in any other town or towns now belonging to the same Convent of Clare.

Executed this 26th day of the month of September aforesaid, with the assent and approval of the reverend father, the Prior Provincial, Frere Thomas Wyntyrtion'. In the year of Our Lord 1388.

In witness whereof the seal of the Prior Provincial and the seals of the priors of the same two convents are unto these presents set.

Intro de Lavenham

Lanyngham | Alton |  
Ipton | Brendyke | Ketyl Carston  
Bretyngham | T Gorpe | aygrewe  
Krylston | Reggynge  
Lycham | wallysham  
Bryfott | Byngyffott | Ballyffott  
Redham | arnfalt | Barkyng | Permyson  
Bulfale | ffymburth magna  
Combro | Badley | ffylbarugge pna  
Stolze arnfalt | Ralinton | Dagworts  
Handley arnfalt | Shelond | Donhals | Barkynton  
Wallypatt | Weddyden | Elmyfwelt  
Drentystone | Tostoke  
Rorton | Tgnestone  
Hessett | Bafeton  
Honzham | Pofsbrike  
Whehvetym pna  
Montyozbradfeld  
Gander | bradfeld  
Colfoote | Gaddynge  
Helfham | Ballyshen  
Lavenham | bradfeld



## [No. 3.]

*Names of the towns of the limitation of Bury.(e)*

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Bury                | Kenford           |
| Brokley             | lydgate*          |
| Boxsted             | lawsell           |
| Barnston            | Multon'           |
| Barogh'             | Nowzton           |
| Bradley magna       | Owysden           |
| Bradley parua       | Whepsted          |
| Colynge*            | Whelniptham magna |
| Chypley             | Reade             |
| Chevyngton'         | Rysbyze           |
| Chedber'            | Stannysfeld*      |
| Dallham*            | Straddysshell     |
| Debden              | Stannysted        |
| Denston             | Shympplyng        |
| Glemysford*         | Somyrton          |
| Gasley              | Stanneld          |
| Havyrhell'*         | Saxham magna      |
| Harogdon            | Saxham parva      |
| Harttest            | Thyrlouze magna*  |
| Hawsted'            | Thyrlouze parva   |
| Hornyngsherth magna | Wykham broke      |
| Hornyngsherth parva | Wyddyrsfeld'      |
| Hardgrave           | Wrattyng magna    |
| Hykworth            | Wrattyng parva    |
| Kedyngton*          | Westley           |

## [No. 4.]

*The Limitation of Lavynham.(f)*

Lavynham, Alton  
 Preston, Brendylle, Kettylberston  
 Brettyngham, Thorpp Merewse  
 Bylston, Neggyng  
 Hecham, Wattysham  
 Brysett, Ryngyssell, Battysforth  
 Nedham Markatt, Barkyng, Dermysdon

(e)Harl. 4835 f. 61.

(f)Harl. 4835 f. 61b.

Buksale, Fymbarow magna  
Combys, Badley, Fynbarogh parna  
Stowze markatt, Newzton Dagworth  
Hawley Markatt, Shelond, Oonhowse, Harlyston  
Wollpett, Weddyrden, Elmyswell  
Drenkystone, Tostooke  
Norton, Thurstone  
Hessett, Beketon  
Rowzham, Roshbroke  
Whelnetham parva  
Monkys Bradfeld  
Sencler Bradfeld  
Cokfeeld, Geddyng  
Felsham, Ratlysdn  
Brent Bradfeeld(g)

(g)Struck through.