

A FEW NOTES ON THE  
HISTORY OF HATHERN.



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IT is extremely difficult to write anything like a connected story of Hathern, since the village has never, so far as one can read, had a resident lord of the manor. And the church, which a hundred years ago could have helped to a considerable degree in piecing together parts of that story, has suffered almost (but not quite) beyond redemption from the hand of the "restorer" – ill-omened word. Yet there are many things in Hathern which attract enquiry, and a patient workman can dig a fair amount of historical treasure from the rich mine of the story of the past.

It would be interesting to know if Hathern existed in early Saxon times. The present writer, though he believes it did (the wish being father to the thought, maybe), has not been able to find any proof of such early existence. The first mention he has found of Hathern is in Domesday Book, where Hathern is included in the manor of Kegworth (spelled Cogeworde); the name is spelled Avederne. The manor of Cogeworde belongs to Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, who also owned the manor of Loughborough. It is noted that this manor (Cogeworde) belonged to Harold the Earl, afterwards King, so that many Hathern men, no doubt, fought at Stamford Bridge and fell at Hastings.

Many interesting documents, legal or testamentary, survive, which throw light on the ownership of land, the lordship of the village, quaint mediæval customs, the patronage of the church, and a little of its interior arrangement. Among interesting payments in lieu of rent occur the following: - A rose; a sparrow-hawk yearly, payable on the Feast of the Assumption; three hens, one arrow; one penny per annum; a pair of white gloves yearly at Easter - in this case it is expressly laid down that the tenant incurs no liability for foreign service.

In the middle ages the patronage of the benefice of Hathern belonged to Leicester Abbey (St. Mary-in-the-Meadows), and we learn from an early document that it pays a pension of 3 marks and a stone of wax. Apparently this payment was contested but the right of the Abbey was successfully upheld in the courts. This pension is still paid - to a lay impropriator!

It is possible to make out a fairly complete list of Rectors from the year 1220, when the registers of Hugo de Welles, Bishop of Lincoln, reveal that one Richard was inducted to the possession of the benefice.

In 1280 Hathern and Shepshed were counted as one ville.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century it is noted that "the convent of Garendon owns a considerable portion of the town of Hathern, as also does the convent of Grace Dieu.

In 1516 occurs an interesting will of Robert Shakespere, called Eymerson. The testator directs that his body be interred in the "Church of the Holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul," with all the rites of the Church, in "St. Katherine's choir afore the image of St. Nicholas." He directs 4d. to be paid to the Church of Lincoln: 2/8 to the High Altar of Hathern for tithes neglected, and an

offering of 12d. ; for breaking ground - Hathern Church 6/8. After this follow various interesting bequests to his family.

In 1534, £4 13s 4d. was paid for repairs to the Church, and 13/4 to the Church of Kegworth.

There is very little information as to what happened in Hathern at the Reformation; but from the reign of Queen Elizabeth we find an increasingly large amount of material, to which the Church Registers, which are exceedingly regular and in splendid preservation, contribute largely. It is possible to trace in them the successive holders of the benefice, the story of the principal families, the changes in the government occurring during the period of the great Civil War, outbreaks of the plague, and so forth.

The informed and imaginative spirit can detect many a little romance, many a little comedy, and many a little tragedy from a close study of the Parish Registers. The Hathern Registers, which date from 1563, are complete from that year, and in excellent condition. The sympathetic student feels that these books breathe the very spirit of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and closes them with a realisation that

"Many a flower is born to blush unseen

And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Eleven years before the Registers began, an interesting little document was compiled at Hathern, being an inventory of the property of the Church, prepared for the King's (Edward VI) Commissioners, before the Great Pillage of the parish churches.

“Hatherne 1552

Inprimis. A silver chalice.

Item. Three vestments (? Complete sets of mass vestments).

Item. A cope of satyn of Burges (can this be the Cope made for “The Parson of Hatherun,” by the ladies of Grace Dieu ?)

Item. Three bells: Two hand bells.

Item. A cross.

All these treasures have long disappeared, as has also the silver plate presented to Hathern by Dame Mary Phillips in 1698.

Among the famous names connected with Hathern (and noted by Potter) is that of John Aylmer, bishop of London, who at his death in 1594 was patron of the benefice. He had been Lady Jane Grey’s tutor, and it had been said that he was “the only preacher in Leicestershire, where he effectually fixed the Protest and religion.”

In 1607 Ralph Pratt, gentleman and leather seller of London by will (dated Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> in this year), gave an annuity of 26/8 to the parson and churchwardens of Hathern for ever.

In the early years of this century (17<sup>th</sup>), at least two mediæval stained glass windows survived – the east window and a window in the north aisle. The east window had been put in by Hugh Ducket, Rector in 1298, whose coat-of-arms were still to be seen in the east window when Nichols visited Hathern early in the eighteenth century. The window in the north aisle contained an inscription: “Orate pro animabus Gulielmi

Bonyngton et Matildæ uxoris suæ qui hanc fenestram fieri fecerunt” (“Pray for the souls of William Bonington and Matilda his wife, who had this window made.”) There were then two splendid tombs still existent, one, that of Ralph and Elizabeth Marshall, and the other an incised alabaster slab, small fragments of which remain in the Rectory garden.

In 1624 Gabriel Armstrong, curate and son-in-law of his predecessor, Thomas Barrowdale, became rector. He held the benefice for 21 years, he and his wife and three of their children dying in August, 1645 – supposedly of the plague: there were 74 deaths in Hathern that year, most of them between mid-July and the end of August – a big proportion for a village whose total population at that time was less than 200. Mr. Armstrong appears to have been a popular man, for, for over one hundred years the name of Gabriel was a favourite one in the village.

He was succeeded by Joseph Smith, but on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1646, Robert Palmer, vicar of Shepshed, was intruded into the rectory. Although in favour with the Puritan party, Mr. Palmer was yet in 1650 returned as “No preacher and scandalous.” His burial is noticed in the Shepshed Registers, “Robert Palmer, Minister of the Word of God, and Vicar of the P’sh, was buried the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1658.”

The care of registration and the custody of the Registers was transferred to the Civil from the Religious authority in 1653, and re-transferred at the Restoration in 1660. George Coolridge was sworn in as Registrar on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January in the former year, before William Bainbrigge, Justice of the Peace, in accordance with the Act of August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1652. From then till the Restoration it is the birth that is registered, and not the baptism of

the child. The last entry of baptism is July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1653, and the first birth registered November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1653: a peculiar feature at Hathern is that in most cases both birth and baptism are registered, e.g. .... borne 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. : baptised 30<sup>th</sup> Dec."

It may be of interest to show the way in which marriages (civil) were registered:-

"Published and Declared in the parish Church of Hathern, upon the 19<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1653, the 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1654, and the second day of April, 1654, that there is a marriage intended shortly to be had and solemnized between Gabriell Bowley, the sonne of George Bowley, mason, and Mary Harryman, the Daughter of Thomas Harryman, husbandman, both of this Parishes and beinge noe exception they preceded as followeth

'Gabrielle Bowley, the sonne of George Bowley, mason, and Mary Harryman the daughter of Thomas Harryman husbandman weare married the XIth day of April 1654 before me Will: Bainbrigg' "

You will notice a curious mistake by the Registrar in registering his first publication of Banns, 1653 for 1654.

William Danvers was another officiating justice whose signature occurs twice in the Registers. In several instances the intention of marriage was published "in the Markett Place at Loughburrow" on "three severall Markett Days." The actual weddings occurred at Hathern, Lockington, Garendon, Mountsorrel, and Kingston.

It was in all probability during the Commonwealth that the Calvary of the Cross was broken in accordance with the Ordinance of 1644 (May 9<sup>th</sup>), which extended the clause about the removal of crosses, images, &c. -

previously confined to Churches, Chapels, or places belonging to them - to "all open places whatsoever." The Cross received the poetic attention of Dean Alford, once vicar of Wymeswold, famous as a scholar and a hymn writer (he wrote "Come, ye thankful people, come," and "Forward! be our watchword"), and a faithful Christian pastor. He is of interest to Hathern folk, not only in that he took services in Hathern on more than one occasion, but also because he was, so the present writer understands, the special preacher at the re-opening of the church after the restoration on Whit Sunday, 1862.

The Cross reminds one of the other monument of great antiquity which Hathern possesses - one of the oldest fountains in the county. Let me quote Potter:- "..... we noticed as a garden ornament, an ancient and very beautiful fountain, which, in our view, is far preferable to its modern substitute ....." That remark is endorsed by the writer, who is glad to be able to say that the fountain has now been removed to the churchyard and, all being well, will be taken into church very soon. Would that it could be restored to use!

There occurs a curious little entry in the Baptismal Register in the year 1655:-

"Memoir that on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of January there was a man child born of vagrant parents, and I demanded their names and they answered what was that to me."

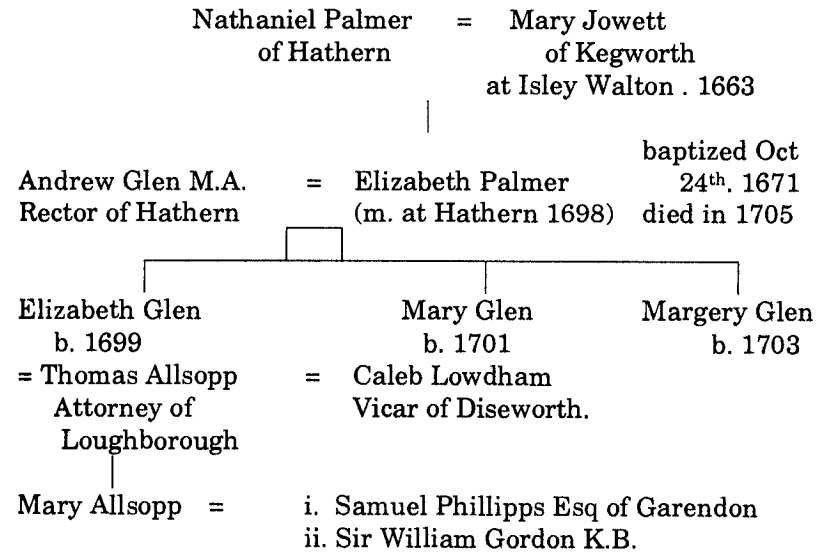
In 1682 died Thomas Allsopp (a conforming Presbyterian), who had been Rector for 34 years. He left an annuity of 24/- (Rev. Thos. Allsopp's Charity) by will to the poor of the parish.

Andrew Glen, fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and a great authority on plants, became Rector in 1694. He is interesting for two reasons - first out of curiosity

about the man, and secondly because of the part his family bore in the history of the manor of Garendon.

First, as the man himself. Potter, in talking of Cotes (he does not give any date, tantalising man!), says, "Where stood the parsonage of that good pastor of Cotes, who so often risked his life for his people when the Plague was depopulating the village? What Mompesson was to Egan, the devoted Andrew Glen was to Cotes. He cheered the victims with the consolations of religion; he fed and tended them while living, and after their death bore them himself to the graves, which his own hands had dug, for nobody else had the courage to go near the stricken." Was Andrew Glen, of Cotes, the same as Andrew Glen, of Hathern, or were they father and son?

Then secondly, the sympathetic can get many a hint of romance out of a family tree, and as all the world loves a lover, so all the world loves a story of the humble mounting to high places. The family tree of Andrew Glen seems full of possibility for a fiction writer of imagination. I will give the bare tree, and leave the filling in of romantic detail to the knowledge or fancy of your readers.



And so it came about that at the passing of the Enclosure Act in 1777 Sir W. Gordon was lord of the Manor of Hathern, in right of his wife, the widow of Samuel Phillipps of Garendon.

Mr. Glen died in 1732, and was succeeded by Thomas Heath, who was also Vicar of Shepshed, whose amenities he preferred, so in Shepshed he lived and died (1765), Hathern being served by a curate. I have often wondered if the loss of the Hathern place (which was given by the same donor and in the same year, is the Shepshed plate, which was, I believe, superabundant), would be solved if the full history of Mr. Heath's ministry were known. Being of value it may, except for the pieces necessary for the Sacrament, have been kept at Shepshed for safety, and at the end of 33 years its real home have been forgotten. I believe that in neither case was the name of the recipient parish included in the inscription.

Certainly the miserable sum of £4 13s 6d. seems inadequate as the price of a cup, two large flagons, and two salvers, all silver and nearly two hundred years old.

One of Mr. Heath's curates at Hathern was William Middleton, who served the parish for many years as curate, and was rector for 35 years, and to him Nicholls owed his information about Hathern, so that he must have been a man with a certain aptitude for antiquarian study. The name was familiar to an older generation, many of whom had their money in Middleton's Bank. The present cast window of Hathern Church was put in as a memorial to him by his grandson. Three of the five bells were hung during his incumbency, the treble being given by voluntary subscription of the parish.

In 1777 an Act was passed for enclosing the open fields and commons "within the Lordship or Liberty and Parish of Hatherne," and a Commission was issued to William Wyatt, of Burton, Thomas Oldknow, of Nottingham, and John Smith, of Packington, Gentlemen. The principal landholders were – Sir William Gordon (in right of Dame Mary Gordon, his wife), the Revd. William Middleton, the Revd. Joseph Smith, as curate of the Chapel of Osmaston, the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Christ's College, Cambridge [Richard Cheslyn, Esq., Lessee and sub-tenants, Thomas Exon, Joseph Halford, Samuel Smith, and Alice Lowe, widow]: Francis, earl of Huntingdon; Joseph Halford; Alice Lowe; Thomas Bowley; Samuel Bowler, and William Boyer. This Act and the subsequent award were accompanied by maps which are of tremendous importance to those interested in the Hathern of other days.

In 1798 the inhabitants were principally framework knitters: wages – labourers, 1/2; carpenters 2/-. Land on an average, 23/- per acre, and Pit Coal, 7d a hundred.

In 1801 Sunday Schools were established in Hathern by William Bayley Cocker the then curate, who also put a check on the fights which used to occur in the churchyard on the north side of the Church. What means Mr. Cocker adopted to stop the fights we do not know, he may have entered into them himself – a disciple of muscular Christianity - and stopped them, "vi et armis." Fives and skittles were played in the bay between the north aisle and the vestry, the site now occupied by the Phillipps Memorial Chapel.

Here is an interesting quotation from the Baptismal Register dated 1804 – "John, son of Thomas and Margaret Brookes, framework knitter; Mary Ann, daughter of Thomas and Margaret Brookes, born at Sligo in Ireland, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1799, and baptised in the Church there by the Revd. James Armstrong, Curate. Rebecca, daughter of Thomas and Margaret Brookes, born at Croone in Ireland in the county of Limerick, on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1802, and baptised in the church there by the Revd. Mr. Graves. This is the affirmation of the parent, Thomas Brookes (then a soldier in the Prince of Wales' Fencibles (Infantry), serving in Ireland at the time of the birth of these children), who wished to have them registered in his own native place.

J. Hodges, Curate."

The descendants of this worthy pair still live in the village.

In 1808 Edward Thomas March Phillipps became rector. Of his work, social and philanthropic, medical and religious, whole volumes might be written. His

warmest sympathies were extended to Sunday Schools, allotments, unemployment, education: he was the last minister of All Saints, Dishley and the founder of Thorpe Acre Church.

In the compass of these few lines it is impossible to do justice to the memory of a man really great and well beloved. Let us fall back upon the invaluable Potter. Speaking of Mr. Phillipps he says:- "The Church had no better pastor – the Bible Society no better friend ..... of him those that loved him may truly say

"That life is all the sweeter that he lived  
And death is all the brighter that he died."

Not only the beautiful Church, but every home in Hathern has a halo cast over it by memories of that excellent man. The Rectory may well invite the pilgrim's steps, for there he was pastor and physician of the body and soul for more than half a century.

The Baptismal Register records in 1809 the christening of Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, the founder of the monastery of Mount St. Bernard.

In 1832 the Charity Room was built by Mr. Phillipps as a Church Sunday School.

In 1835 – a year of great distress in the hosiery trade – he organized a collection of money to provide work for those who were hard hit; the Round Bank was cleared and levelled, and the streets and lanes were widened. The schools were built in 1849, and in 1850 the chancel of the Church was rebuilt at a cost of £300. One interesting note deserves record, to put against all that used to be implied in the phrase "wicked Hathern." In 1856 "the Book Hawking Society sold more books in Hathern than in any other village of the same size."

Mr. Phillipps died on Wakes' Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1859, and was succeeded by his son-in-law and curate, Edward Smythies, who restored the church in 1861-2, and built a transeptal chapel as a memorial of his maintained predecessor.

Would we could have discussed the rise and wane of the hand-frame industry, and the greatness of Hathern cricket, but time and space alike forbid.

The writer is conscious of many omissions. Much might be written, for example about the Hathern charities, and about the rise of local government. But there must be many alive today who are familiar with the happenings of the last sixty years, so that any discussion in this latest chapter of Hathern history is superfluous, and it would be both kind and wise to lay down the pen and blot the page.

It may be of interest to note the rise and fall of population up to the census of 1891.

### Population of Hathern

Year	No. of Houses.	Population	Year	No. of Houses.	Population
1666	... 42 families (say 210)		1831	... 273	... 1289
1683	... --	183	1841	... 289	... 1252
		adults			
1676	... --	... 179	1851	... 290	... 1187
1793	... --	... 984	1861	... 299	... 1112
1801	... 201	... 956	1871	... 297	... 1120
1811	... 211	... 1098	1881	... 313	... 1312
1821	... 241	... 1144	1891	... 315	... 1133

## List of Rectors and Patrons of the Benefice.

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Rector.</i>	<i>Patron.</i>
1220	Richard — ...	Leicester Abbey
—	Martin de Patteshalle ...	" "
1229	Richard de Duac ...	" "
—	— ...	" "
1298	Hugh Ducket ...	" "
—	Richard de Stapleton ...	" "
1363	John de Horsele ...	" "
1372	John de Calverton ...	" "
1407	Walter Bulkyngton ...	" "
—	— ...	" "
1507	Edward Bothe ...	" "
1526	William Fysher ...	" "
1534	William Gillett ...	" "
1560	Edward Buxom ...	" "
1571	Baldwin Dereham ...	" "
1574	Thomas Barrowdale, senr. ...	Adrian Stokes of Beaumanor
1583	William Ashton ...	" "
1584	Thomas Barrowdale, jun. ...	Duke of Lancaster (i.e. Queen Elizabeth)
1594	—	John Aylme, Bishop of London
1614	—	Henry Skipworth, Esq., of Cotes
1617	—	Samuel Rugeley, Esq
1638	Gabriel Armstrong	
1646	Joseph Smith ...	
1646	Robert Palmer, Vicar of Shepshed	Intruded
1648	Thomas Allsopp ...	
1682	Matthew Trigge, M.A. ...	James Abney, Esq.
1691	John Winter ...	The Crown (William III and Mary)
1694	Andrew Glen, M.A. ...	Sir Ambrose Phillipps
1732	Thomas Heath, M.A. ...	William Phillipps Esq.
1765	William Middleton, A.B. ...	Samuel Phillipps, Esq
1777	—	Sir William Gordon, K.B.
1798	—	Thomas March Phillipps, Esq.
1800	Christopher Taylor, D.D. ..	" " "
1808	Edward Thomas March Phillipps, M.A. ..	" " "
1859	Edward Smythies, B.A. ...	" " "
1891	Joseph Glen Lawrance ...	" " "
1923	Arthur Jesse Ison, B.A., C.T.A.	John German, Esq.