

HILDERSHAM

CHURCH

Hildersham church had probably been established by c.1150 & belonged originally to the “de Vere’s”, since Hatfield Broadoak Priory (Essex), founded by the “de Vere’s” c.1135, received a portion of Tithes at Hildersham, worth 5 marks in 1291.²⁷⁷ In 1210 the ‘Advowson’ of the Rectory was in dispute between Gerald de Camville & his sister Maud de Ros,²⁷⁸ each holding half the manor, & by 1279 was held by Gerald’s successors, from whom it passed to the Busteler’s.²⁷⁹ In 1347, Grimbald Pauncefoot’s widow Clemence, recovered her third turn to present in “Right of Dower” against Robert le Busteler.²⁸⁰ Busteler’s successors, the Paryses, retained the ‘Advowson’,²⁸¹ & after the Elizabethan settlement, as ‘Papists’, were ‘Importuned’ by Bishops & such staunch Protestants as Sir Francis Walsingham to accept recommendations for the living.²⁸² In 1638, Charles Parys sold the ‘Advowson’ to Isaac Appleton who in 1649 sold it to Henry Smith (d.1702), Rector since 1642.²⁸³

Smith resigned the living in 1684 & presented his son Henry, upon his marriage in 1685 the ‘Advowson’ was entailed. The younger Smith sold it in 1714 to James Salt, & died in 1736,²⁸⁴ whereupon Salt had himself presented. He died in 1758 having settled the ‘Advowson’ successively on his sons James (d.s.p. 1797) & Thomas (d.1806), who each in turn presented himself to the living.²⁸⁵ In 1801, Thomas Salt sold the ‘Advowson’ to James Goodwin, who presented his son Charles Goodwin in 1806 & died the same year.²⁸⁶ Charles, Goodwin, who died in 1847 (aged 71; 1776-1847), left the ‘Advowson’ to his second son, Robert,²⁸⁷ who held the Rectory upon his own representation²⁸⁸ until his death in 1899 (aged 83; 1816-1899) In 1901, his sisters & heirs Sarah Goodwin (d.1909; aged 97;1812 –1909) & Frances Goodwin (d. 191; aged 89; 1821-1910) vested the ‘Advowson’ in “Trustees”, including the new Rector, Phillip Richard Phillips, for the benefit of the church. When Phillips resigned in 1947 presentation was ‘Suspended’ & the ‘Cure’ was thereafter served by neighbouring incumbents or retired Clergymen.²⁸⁹

The Rectorial Glebe consisted of c.50 acres of arable in 1279,²⁹⁰ 62 acres In the 17th century,²⁹¹ & 67½ acres, including closes in 1777.²⁹² The 55 acres allotted for Glebe at ‘Inclosure’ in 1889²⁹³ was sold in 1919.²⁹⁴ In 1951 the church retained 9 acres of Glebe.²⁹⁵ The ‘Tithes’, still being taken in Kind in 1800,²⁹⁶ were commuted in 1840 for a ‘Tithe-Rent’ charge of £423.15 s.²⁹⁷ The

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Rectory house stood c.1560 in a Copyhold close opposite the church, held by successive Rectors until its 'Enfranchisement' in 1848.²⁹⁸ The house had seven hearths in 1664²⁹⁹ & was said to be large & in good repair in 1783.³⁰¹ A large brick house built in 'Tudor' style c.1851³⁰² had been sold by 1961.³⁰³

The 'Benefice' was taxed at £12 in 1217, & at 20 marks in 1291,³⁰⁴ but only at £15 in 1535.³⁰⁵ By 1650 it was worth £80 a year & in 1728 £100.³⁰⁶ The Rectors income was £320 c.1830,³⁰⁷ & £450 in 1877.³⁰⁸

About 1300 a Rector gave the church 3 acres in 'Free Alms'.³⁰⁹ By mid 18th century the rent of 3 acres called "The Town Land", yielding 10 s. a year in the 18th century & £3 5 s. in the 19th century, was by custom devoted to church repairs & expenses.³¹⁰ From 1524, 3s. 4d. a year for church repairs was also received from "John Bolton's Charity" (Abington).³¹¹ The 'Endowment' of the church by Sarah & Francis Goodwin in 1901 is mentioned previously.³¹²

In the early 14th century the Patrons sometimes chose their Kinsmen or Dependents as Rectors. Ralph Hengham 'Presented' his clerk John Hengham, Rector 1311-1321, & William le Busteler in 1321 'Presented' his younger son William, still Rector in 1332.³¹³ William's successor, William Gryselegh, c.1338 until 1342, was frequently absent in the service of the Countess of Norfolk or the Earl of Suffolk.³¹⁴ In 1379 the Rector had two Chaplains to assist him.³¹⁵ In the late 15th & early 16th centuries Hildersham had a "Guild of Assumption"³¹⁶ Margaret, wife of John Parys (d.1517), whose Dower included the 'Advowson', 'Presented' in 1518 William Burgoyne, Master of Peterhouse (d.1523), & then his brother Thomas Burgoyne, Rector 1523-1550, who held Hildersham in 'Plurality' with Sandy (Beds) from 1526.³¹⁷ Both were probably non-resident, employing Curates.³¹⁸

John Reston, Rector 1550-1, was Master of Jesus College, Cambridge.³¹⁹ His successor Dr Thomas Heskyns, also usually non-resident, had abandoned the 'Cure' by 1561 to go overseas, where he became a Catholic 'Controversialist'.³²⁰ George Fuller, Rector 1561-1591, usually resided in Hildersham, & built up an estate in the neighbourhood,³²¹ but regularly employed Curates,³²² the first recorded being a 'Convinced Protestant'.³²³ Fuller's successor John Smith held Hildersham with Fen Ditton until his death in 1614. In 1593 his Curate was said to be failing to 'Catechize' the children.³²⁴ Thomas Murriell, Rector 1614-1629 held two livings & was 'Archdeacon' of Norfolk.³²⁵ Henry Smith, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, was succeeded at Hildersham when he died in 1642 by his son Henry,³²⁶ who held the living right through the "Interregnum", being described in 1650 as an

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‘Orthodox’ & ‘Godly Divine’.³²⁷ Through his purchase of the ‘Advowson’ in 1649 the Rectory became a family living held by three successive Clerical Dynasties until 1900.³²⁸

The third Henry Smith was resident in 1728, when he was holding Communion seven times a year & two Services every Sunday. He claimed up to 18 Communicants.³²⁹ James Salt was likewise resident in 1775 & conducted Services in person,³³⁰ but his brother Thomas Salt, already Vicar of Nazeing (Essex) employed the Revd. Andrew Perne of Little Abington as Curate.³³¹ In 1807 the newly ‘Presented’ Charles Goodwin had few Communicants³³² & only c.20 in 1825, although he held Services twice each Sunday & Communion four times a year.³³³ He was normally resident, as was his son Robert Goodwin, who also held Great Abington from 1845, but usually employed Curates, including in 1877 the Master of Saffron Walden Grammar School. Robert then claimed that almost all the Parishioners came to church & up to 47 people attended the monthly Communion.³³⁴ By 1897 he was also holding services on weekdays in Lent & on many Saints’ days, & by 1894 had instituted a ‘Surpliced’ Choir.³³⁵ There were 49 Communicants in 1905,³³⁶ 43 in 1939, when most of the Congregation of 90 went to church every other Sunday.³³⁷

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The church of the Holy Trinity, so called by 1521,³³⁸ stands west of the street & north of the river. It is built of ‘Field Stones’ (Flints) with ‘Ashlar’ dressings, & consists of a Chancel with a south Chapel & north Sacristy & the west tower are of early 13th century. The tower, unbuttressed & surmounted by a small spike, has simple Lancets to the two lower stages & double Lancets under restored plate tracery to the third & inside is divided from the Nave by two low arches. The tall Nave, rebuilt in the 13th century, but probably retaining its earlier proportions, has one ‘Quatrefoil’ pier on each side; the ‘Clerestory’ has cusped windows in square frames, possibly restored. The Aisle have simple Decorated ‘Tracery’, & may be contemporary with the south Chapel built by William le Busteler, rector 1321-1332,³³⁹ perhaps as a ‘Chantry’ for his parents. The Chancel arch was rebuilt probably c.1400.³⁴⁰ In the 15th century the Chancel was given new windows which still survived c. 1850,³⁴¹ & a new door to the Sacristy.

The octagonal 13th century font rests on five columns & has ‘Trefoiled’ canopies on each face. Screens between the Chancel & the South Chapel & Nave survived in 1742³⁴² but were swept away at the Victorian restoration,

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when the roof also was entirely renewed.³⁴³ Despite William Dowsing's efforts in 1644³⁴⁴ much Medieval Glass survived in 1742, & a few fragments that remained c.1880 were then reset.³⁴⁵ Among notable monuments in the church are the 'Effigies', carved in Oak, of a cross-legged Knight & a Lady, perhaps commemorating William le Busteler (d.1334) & his wife.³⁴⁶ The Chancel 'contains Brasses with Effigies ascribed to Robert Parys (d.1377) & his wife Eleanor, to Henry Parys (d.1427) & his wife Margery, & to Henry Parys (d.1466).³⁴⁷ A Tomb-slab carved with a cross lies under an 'Ogee-Headed' recess in the north wall of the Chancel, where Robert Parys's Brass once lay.

In 1601 the Church windows were found to be much broken & the Chancel not 'Whitewashed',³⁴⁸ & in 1638 the Aisles were blocked by two large Pews.³⁴⁹ Both Chapel & Aisles were out of repair in 1665,³⁵⁰ & in 1742 the Chapel was unfloored.³⁵¹ In 1803 the Churchwardens sold the lead off the roof & pulled down the South Chapel.³⁵² Between 1853 & 1890 the Church was heavily restored by the Rector Robert Goodwin, latterly with C.A. Buckler as Architect.³⁵³ The Chancel & North Aisles were remodelled by 1855 & the South Chapel rebuilt soon after. The Chancel arch was refashioned, the walls were thoroughly scraped, & at Goodwin's insistence the "Perpendicular Tracery" in the Chancel windows was then replaced with "Reticulated Tracery". The Tower was raised 13 ft. & the roof replaced & 'Slated' in 1878. The Chancel was entirely covered c.1890 with paintings.³⁵⁴ which were restored in 1973.³⁵⁵ Stained glass, including an East window by Clayton & Bell,³⁵⁶ greatly darkened the Church, & an 'Alabaster' 'Reredos' was installed in memory of James Raymond, tenant at the Hildersham Hall in 1851 & 1871.³⁵⁷ When work was completed in 1890³⁵⁸ the interior appeared, as in 1973, almost entirely Victorian.

In 1542 Margaret Parys bequeathed to the Church an Organ standing in it.³⁵⁹ In the early 19th century music was supplied from a 'Singing Gallery' at the west end erected since 1742. After its demolition c.1870 several players never set foot in the Church again. A new Organ, given by Robert Goodwin, was installed in 1900.³⁶⁰ In 1552 the Church had three Bells.³⁶¹ Three new Bells were cast in 1581, two were sold in 1803. The third & lightest was used in 1880 by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough in making three new Bells,³⁶² which survived in 1973. A Silver 'Cup & Paten' by Thomas Buttell were acquired in 1569.³⁶³ The 'Parish Registers' are complete from 1559.³⁶⁴

NONCONFORMITY

In 1582, Thomas Dalton & his wife were said to have failed to have come to Church for a year.³⁶⁵ Although the manor was owned until 1800 by ‘Papists’ there is no evidence of Catholic ‘Recusancy’ in Hildersham, nor Protestant dissent before 1783, when two families were said to attend a meeting in Linton.³⁶⁶ In 1825 the number of dissenters was said to be increasing.³⁶⁷ A house was registered for Dissenting Worship in 1828 & a building in 1837, the later by Thomas Hopkins,³⁶⁸ Independent Minister at Linton.³⁶⁹ Perhaps the same building was the ‘Out-Station’ of the Linton Chapel, lately adapted for Worship, where the Linton Minister, G. J. Hall, held Saturday evening services in 1851 with an average attendance of 100.³⁷⁰ It had closed by 1877, & in 1897 all inhabitants were said to be nominally Church people.³⁷¹

EDUCATION

In 1524, money was left for four boys to go to School,³⁷² & Hildersham had un-licensed School Masters in 1579 & 1601.³⁷³ In 1818 the Parish Clerk kept a School for 30 boys & his wife taught girls to read & sew, while an evening School was held for young men.³⁷⁴ In 1833 there was only one Day-School with 10 pupils, for whom their parents paid.³⁷⁵ By 1851, a Day-School & Sunday School had been set up in a building south-east of the church.³⁷⁶ The Parochial School was supported in 1864 by contributions from Parishioners & in 1879 by the Rector Robert Goodwin & “School-Pence”. It was rebuilt in 1879-1880³⁷⁷ for up to 111 children. Attendance between 1898 & 1914 fluctuated around 40.³⁷⁸ The School had separate mixed & infants departments in 1914.³⁷⁹ By 1919 attendance had declined to c.20.³⁸⁰ Many children went to Abington Primary School, & in 1928, when it had only 7 pupils, Hildersham School was closed.³⁸¹

CHARITIES FOR THE POOR

From 1524, Hildersham received 6s. 8d. a year under the will, proved 1509, of John Bolton of Little Abington, half for its Church & half for its Poor. The money was still paid in 1965. Since 1929, it had been a ‘Rent-Charge’ on Abington Hall whose owner redeemed it for £10 in 1966.³⁸² In 1573, the Parish bought with its “Town Stock” the 4 acre “Bodney’s Close” north of the Church, the income to be distributed twice a year to the Poor. In 1590, one of the “Feoffees”, Thomas Dalton (d.1602), acquired “Bodney’s Close” subject to a

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‘Rent-Charge’ of £1, ³⁸³ which was still received in 1965. By the 18th century, the Churchwardens were distributing the two Charities together, usually at Christmas, in ‘Doles’ of 6d. to 1s. 6d. In 1766, there were 22 recipients, including 8 widows, in 1834, 14 recipients. ³⁸⁴ In the early 20th century, the income was saved for several years & then distributed in Coal. ³⁸⁵ The cottagers’ ‘Right to Common’ over St. Margaret’s Green, reputed a Charity in 1837, ³⁸⁶ was replaced at ‘Inclosure’ by Allotments. ³⁸⁷

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