

WHO WAS WILLIAM STAYNFORD, THE ABBOT OF THE SCREEN IN MITTON CHURCH ?

Contributed by the Rev. Joseph McNulty, B.A., F.R.Hist.S.

IN at least five published lists of the abbots of Cockersand appears the name of William Staynford under date 1393.¹ The error was due to Dr. T. D. Whitaker, as the Rev. C. A. Newdigate, S.J., pointed out in the *Transactions* of this Society in 1917.² Whitaker concluded that, as Mitton Church was appropriated to the Premonstratensian abbey of Cockersand, the screen in that church had belonged to Cockersand; and, presumably, that the strip nailed to the screen belonged to the screen.

The strip, which contains the inscription, is in a number of separate parts. Of the inscription two words appear to be missing and part of the date.³ The work commemorated by the inscription had been done in the time of Dom William Staynford, abbot, in the year of the Lord one thousand (the rest of the date is missing), to the honour of the Blessed Virgin. The words 'ad honorem b[ea]t[e] V[irginis]' were read by Whitaker as 'CCC ° nonageno [sic] III,' and consequently under date 1393 William Staynford entered his list of the abbots of Cockersand. The editors of the fourth edition of Whitaker's *Whalley* (1872-6) printed what Whitaker imagined he saw in addition to what was really on the screen strip.

¹ Whitaker, *Richmondshire*, ii, 1823, 335; *Cockersand Chartulary* (Chet. Soc., 38, 1898) xxii; *Collectanea Anglo-Praemonstratensia* (Camden Soc., 3rd ser., 10, 1906) ii, 106; *V.C.H. Lancs.*, ii (1908) 159; Earwaker, *Local Gleanings*, art. 740, 1878.

² Vol. 69, pp. 68-70.

³ Four good plates of the inscription may be seen in the *Transactions* of the Lancs. and Chesh. Antiq. Soc., vol. 40 (1925). The first word may have been 'Expensis,' and the word following 'Iohannis' may have been 'baptiste.'

The supporters of the Cockersand theory, having failed to place William Staynford at Cockersand in 1393, maintained that he was the same person as Henry Stayning, who occurs as abbot of Cockersand, 1505-9.¹

The abbot of Cockersand in 1369-70 was Jordan of Bosdon, and William Staynford was not among the canons at that time.² The community in 1380-1 consisted of the abbot (unnamed), and the following canons: Roger of Nottingham, Roger of Manchester, Robert of Newark, William Preesall (Presthow), John of Eccleston, Robert of Poppleton, Thomas of Graystock, Richard of York, Jordan of Bosdon, Nicholas of Warton. There were two laybrothers, Thomas Kellet and Richard of Kyghlay.³ In 1369-70, the cellarer was Thomas of Burgh, who is given as abbot *c.* 1395-*c.* 1410.⁴ As he does not appear among the canons 1380-1, it seems reasonable to conclude that he was the unnamed abbot at that date.

Father Newdigate suggested that William Staynford might have been abbot of Sallay, and in this he had the support of the late Colonel John Parker.⁵ A recent discovery in the Public Record Office proves that they were right.

In 1380-1, the community at Sallay Abbey consisted of the abbot (unnamed, but John) and fourteen monks: Magister William of Remington (evidently prior), John of Roeston, Henry del Clyff, John of Catherton, John del Bang', William of Tadcaster, Richard of Batily, Thomas of Wakefield, Richard of Clitheroe (Cliderow), WILLIAM STAYNFORD, James of Dynlay, Richard Hargrave, John of Holden (?), Adam of [Long] Preston. There were two

¹ *Transactions of L. and C. Antiq. Soc.*, vol. 9, p. 180. Mr. John Swarbrick seemed to have the same possibility in mind, when he suggests a date 1493 (*ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 188). Apart from the difference in the Christian names, Staining in the Fylde and Stainforth near Settle are different places.

² Chetham Society, vol. 100, *Sotheron v. Cockersand*, p. 5.

³ P.R.O., Clerical Subsidy, 63/12.

⁴ *Cockersand Chartulary*, Introduction.

⁵ *Sallay Chartulary*, ii, 198.

laybrothers (*conversi*), John del Barkhouse, Robert del Brewhouse.¹

John occurs as abbot of Sallay 1371, 1377, 1380-1, 1392, 1394.² Richard of Clitheroe occurs 1404-5, and William 1418, 1433; possibly different abbots. The juniority of Richard of Cliderow and William Staynford in 1380-1 is shown by their position on the list. It is almost certain that the William abbot of Sallay in 1418 was William Staynford.

Father Newdigate and Colonel Parker leaned to the idea that the screen came from Bailey Chapel (or Chantry). It seems unlikely that a parish church of such venerable antiquity as Mitton should condescend to borrow a discarded screen from a dismantled chantry in the parish. The theory was based on the supposition that the provenance of screen and strip was one and the same. Neither need we postulate in future a Cockersand origin. I suggest that the screen, though restored, was always at Mitton, and that the strip once graced some woodwork in the abbey of Sallay.

¹ P.R.O., Clerical Subsidy, 63/12. In the same year the vicar of Mitton was John of Bosdon, and the chaplains at Waddington and Bailey were John Archer and Richard of Bradley (*ibid.*).

² S.C., ii, 195.