

25/6/02



Rumburgh Remembered

Church and Village

Rumburgh could well date from Roman times, though there is no trace of a settlement here. It may have been a place where travellers broke their journey en route from Norwich to Dunwich, since it lies just off the A144 - a famous Roman Road. The name suggests a village enclosed by a ditch, bank or hedge, which is accessible via a 'broad bridge' or 'fallen log'. A rectangular moat still surrounds Abbey Farm and the churchyard, in one corner of which, a former incumbent found traces of an ancient drawbridge.

There is no mention of Rumburgh before the foundation of the Priory in 1064, dedicated to St. Michael and St. Felix (the latter being a famous East Anglian saint). In that year Benedictine monks were sent from St. Benet's Hulme Abbey in Norfolk, by authority of Ethelmar, Bishop of Elmham, to establish a cell. The cell survived the beginning of the Norman occupation, and the property remained in the abbey's hands until 1070, when Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, and brother of Ethelmar, was deposed, and his estates, including Bungay, were confiscated. They were transferred to William de Noyers, who built Bungay Castle. Rumburgh was transferred to Alan the Red, Earl of Richmond, and 2nd son of the Duke of Brittany, the King's chief henchman. Upon his death, they passed to his brother, Alan the Black, who gave the Priory to the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary at York, which owned a number of churches in the area, including Wissett & Spexhall. Domesday Book records property held by the church at Rumburgh - 40 acres, 6 borders, 1 plough team and wood for 6 hogs, together with a proportion of rents from a hunting forest.

Apart from a few slender facts, little is known about the life of the Priory up until its suppression in 1528. In 1086 there were 12 monks at Rumburgh under Prior Frater Blakere. By 1291 the priory had accumulated assets in 11 parishes totalling £35.5.11½d. Joes Halton was appointed the last prior in 1525. By September of that year, Stephen Gardiner (later to become Bishop of Winchester) made a Visitation, but 3 years later, on the 12th September, 1528, the Priory was suppressed by authority of Henry VIII.

The revenues and property were granted to Cardinal Wolsey and used to found his college at Ipswich (dissolved in 1530). The Papal Bull issued by Clement VII, granting Rumburgh and

plain 'square-headed' domestic looking windows 5ft x 4ft, formed with very little splay, no tracery, 15ft & 12ft from ground. N Side chancel, light Perp, sill is 9ft from floor. S side 1 Decorated, the other Perp; first has 3 lights, the other two.

In the upper tracery the painted glass has been removed and the bosses of crown glass set in its place. E Window has 4 lights, is modern Perp with depressed arch.

PULPIT Jacobean - plain. Prior to restoration in 1896-7 stood in the middle of the nave.

FONT Late 14th cent. - octagonal, with quatrefoils in each panel - on modern base. Simple Stuart cover.

5 slabs of ALDRICH family
MEMORIALS 4 in Sanctuary - largest to memory of John Norman Gentn; with crest and shield of arms. ~~2 to members of Aldred family.~~ Small slab in S.E. corner to memory of Stephen Elmy, qui obiit 1688. On N wall of chancel, monument: "to continue the memory of Katherine the wife of Samuel Chandler, and of Susan, his wife, of this parish who was the daughter of Capt. Francis Saunders, and Katherine his wife, late of Gt. Yarmouth in ye county of Norfolk, which Susan ye wife of Samuel Chandler (aforesaid) lyeth interred in this place with ten sons and daughters besides her for whom this was erected, who was borne 20 May 1661, and departed this life 12 September 1705, aged 44 years, 4 months and 3 days."

On the nave floor, 5 sepulchral slabs to memory of members of Davy family, also one to memory of a Harvey of Yoxford.

STONE COFFIN Recently re-assembled. Discovered in abbey grounds in mid-19th century, containing skeleton of male 6ft tall. Taken out and interred in S.E. chancel. The inscription on the lid led the incumbent to suppose this to be the tomb of William de Waltham, sometime Prior of Rumburgh.

ARMS OF RUMBURGH PRIORY Discovered during restoration 1878, painted and framed by Rev. Linton Wilson. They hang on W wall of nave (being the Arms of St. Mary, York).

LIST OF PRIORS, VICARS/RECTORS Displayed on W wall of the nave.

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other priories to Wolsey reads: "AD 1528 An.20 H.8. A Bull for the Suppression of the Monasteries of Romboro, Felixtow, Bromehil Bliborow and Montjoie. Registered in the Apostolic Chamber by command of the Very Reverend of the Four Saints, B. MOLTA " (the document concludes) "Given in the OLD CITY in the Year of Our Lord 1528, on the 14th of May, in the 5th Year of Our Papacy. CLEMENT VII Pope." (a transcript of this document can be found in L.B. Cane's definitive and scholarly work 'Rumburgh Priory Church' 1935, upon which much of our material has been based).

There is a record that the Abbot of St. Mary's York tried to bribe the Commissioners, by offering £200 towards Wolsey's college at Ipswich, if they would spare Rumburgh. Knowing the monasteries were threatened, he had sent valuables from York to Rumburgh for safe keeping. Unfortunately, he did not succeed, and both foundations were sacked. Perhaps the Commissioners had some inkling the yearly income was only £30!!

A Survey of the Priory made in the reign of Henry VIII, soon after the Dissolution, now preserved in the Public Records Office, shows there was a monastery here of quite modest proportions, covering approx 12,500 sq ft. The Priory was built around a rectangular Cloister which measured 45ft in length on S and N sides and 66ft on E and W Sides - breadth 6ft. EAST SIDE: Buttery (or cellar), with two lower chambers (probably Sacristy, Chapter House and Slype which led out from N door in Chancel through into burial grd). WEST SIDE: (Prior's Hall with guest bedrooms above), Main Entrance and Kitchen. NORTH SIDE: Refectory, Parlour with Solar or sun lounge above. Chimney in the corner measured 19ft in length 16ft in breadth. SOUTH SIDE: Existing Church and Chancel, the only building with a lead roof (others were slated), 87 ft in length 22ft in breadth. Also included were outbuildings with straw roofs and lands totalling 267 acres and 3 roods

In 1538 the Manor of Rumburgh, together with property and Patronage of the church was purchased by the Duke of Norfolk. It was confiscated when he fell out of favour with King Henry, but was restored to him in 1553. Down the centuries the land has passed into the hands of many local inhabitants, and is now owned and farmed by David Wharton of Abbey Farm.

CHURCH GUIDE

TOWER 13th century - giving the impression of being incomplete. Early English entrance, 3 lancet-shaped windows. Bell Chamber above of timber construction with latticed windows, high pitched tiled roof, flag-pole and weather vane.

BELLS 5 bells inscribed: "1 and 4, Anno Domini 1624, W.I.B.; 2, R.S.I.T.; Churchwardens Anno Domini 1624, W.I.B. 3, Tho. Gardiner - Sudbury fecit 1728; 5, The Revd Althills, Perp. Curate, John Briant Hertford fecit 1823, C. Reynolds." The Royal Commission of 1553 states: 3 bells and one Sanctus bell.

PORCH 15th century. Note large round-headed recess for Holy Water stoup.

NAVE Note 'poppy-headed' pew ends and Jacobean carving on seat backs at W end of church. S. Door into church late Norman opening into walls that are 3ft deep. Minstrels Gallery (W end) assembled 1823-50 removed 1854-66. Clarionet used at that time now hangs in vestry.

ROOF Very flat 'arch-braced' roof, reconstructed out of old high pitched roof. Large flowers at the intersection of purlins and principals. The chancel roof is more recent, but constructed as a continuation of nave roof.

CHANCEL On N side (where vestry door usually found) there is a low Transition doorway - early English, which leads out into grounds of Abbey Farm, where formerly, Slype and E range of buildings stood. Set into same wall, 2ft. from the altar. On S side, round-headed arched doorway, opposite N door (probably Sacristy) blocked up when 15th cent. buttresses were built.

SANCTUARY Raised 2 steps above chancel floor, paved with Minton tiles.

SCREEN Chief feature. Perpendicular - oak - lofty 12ft 6in in height, having fine tracery under pointed arches. Mediaeval colours concealed beneath paint and varnish. Stairway to Rood Loft on left of pulpit, passage built to thickness of wall.

WINDOWS S wall of nave has two good 3 light Perp windows 8ft from floor. N wall has two



The Twentieth century in its earlier years is the subject of the Flower Festival "Rumburgh Remembered" held at the end of May 1977 - the last seventy odd years of village history can be found largely in photographs, press cuttings and in the memories of the inhabitants. In the last 10 years the face of Rumburgh has probably changed faster than at any time during the preceding centuries -

New farming methods have altered the size and shape of our fields - the motor car and bikes have rendered footpaths obsolete - new houses have been built, new people and ideas have come to stay but the history of the village lives all around us; in the antiquity of our houses and hedgerows; in the shape of the roads, in the names of the fields.

In 1846 Emma Goff worked her sampler in Rumburgh and stitched - "When I am dead and in my grave and all my bones be rotten, pray take this up and in it look, that I may be not forgotten".

Rumburgh Remembered

CAROLINE CARDWELL

1064

Priory founded dedicated to St. Michael and St. Felix.

1086

Domesday Book - Rumburgh mentioned by name in the Norfolk entries and "silently" included with the neighbouring parish of Wissett.

1267

Grant for a market in Wissett.

1287

John de Birne sometime Prior of Rumburgh accused of the murder of Andrew de Wysete, chaplain.

1291

Taxation Roll - Priory income was £35.5s.11½d.

1357

Grant by Henry de Grimil to the monks of Rumburgh.....of land in Cove.

Fifteenth century wills contain references to the Spachet Cosyn Flicke and Lynne families.

1462

John Alderech the elder of Rumburgh "to the fabric of the tower of the church 40s."

The Aldriches were a large and wealthy family in Rumburgh and Wissett.

1471

Thos. Lawrence of Rumburgh "to the reparation of Rumburgh Street 6s. 8d.

1483

Geoffrey Errett of Halesworth "to the reparation of the new tower in Rumburgh 2s.

There were also frequent bequests for "my tythes negligently forgotten and not paid."

1525

11th September - Dr. Stephen Gardiner, secretary to Cardinal Wolsey visited the Priory.

1528

Priory suppressed and given to Cardinal Wolsey -

At the time of the suppression a survey was made of the Priory lands and a note headed it indicating some dispute over the parochial status of the church.

1553

Royal Commission established to enquire into the embezzlement of the bells by the Churchwardens.

1625

Benjamin Fairfax became vicar and remained for nearly 40 years until he was ejected for non-conformity in 1662.

1674

Samuel Kello. Rector of Spexhall was made curate at Rumburgh and gloomily surveyed the church "The seats are decayed in the floors. The church walls are decayed much in the stone work. The chancell lieth like a hogscote in the pavements."

1728

Churchwardens' agreement with Thomas Gardiner of Sudbury for "the third bell now hanging in Rumburgh steeple to be made tunneable and toneable with the second and the fourth."

1729

Churchwardens' bill for a bridge into the churchyard £4. 16s. 6½d.

18th Century registers include the following names - Finkney, Hatton, Howlett, Reynolds, Hewson, Shadroch, Chipperfield, Foyster, Fiske, Hadingham, Aldis, Manser, Garrould, Constance, March, Woolnough.

1769

Born David Elisha Davy, son of a farmer, an antiquary and collector who became Receiver - General of Suffolk, and left his collections of genealogy and heraldry now in the British Museum. He remembers when he was a boy in the 1770's "the young people met two or three times a week on Rumburgh Common during the summer evenings for this amusement. (Camping - a medieval ball-game). Matches sometimes used to be made between parishes, which sometimes became real battles."

1774

James Morice minister from Cardiganshire South Wales - a note in the Register.

Nineteenth century Rumburgh is very fully documented.

1837

Land given for building the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.

1841 - Census -

1844

White's Directory - Both these show a community far more self-sufficient than that of today - farmers, wheelwrights, tailors, shoemakers, a miller, maltster, schoolmasters, bricklayer and mason, and of course the inn-keeper - Mr. William Ball kept the Buck.

The population rose to its highest point in the 1840's - 432 in 1841.

Changes occurred -

1850

The common was enclosed and 2 acres reserved as parish allotments. The New Road was made and the Great Stone at the north end of the Common was buried. (the origin of the Great stone is unknown).

1852

Buried Robert Scarle killed by one of the sails of Rumburgh Mill.

1857

Land given for building a school.

1873

School Board forced.

1861

School closed and children sent by bus to Halesworth.