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Conventicle and School in the Vicarage

IT HAS long been known that c. 1670 a minister who had been ejected under the Act of Uniformity, 1662, from his living in Essex settled in Battersea, conducted a school in which he taught and boarded the sons of gentlemen, and received a licence, under the Declaration of Indulgence of King Charles II 1672, to conduct a conventicle in his own house. But exactly where in Battersea was his house? Recently a lease granted in 1653, a declaration signed in 1667, and a careful study of the Battersea rate-books have conspired to throw new light on what has hitherto been known, with most interesting results.

The Rev. Thomas Temple, D.D., was Vicar of Battersea 1634-57. He was an active member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, preached twice in St. Margaret's, Westminster, before the House of Commons during the Long Parliament, and was in some way related to the Lord of the Manor of Battersea, for the will of Sir John St. John, 1st Baronet, who died in 1648, provided a legacy of £50 for "my good Cozen Mr. Doctor Temple." Certainly he resided in the Battersea Vicarage (which stood on the site of the present Vicarage but probably was not the same building) until 1649 or two or three years later; but on the 13th of April, 1653, he signed a three-year lease of the Vicarage to Robert Maye as from Michaelmas 1653, with provisions indicating apparently that the lease was taking immediate effect and should be renewed in a certain event. Thereafter Dr. Temple resided at York Place, on the west bank of the creek that was formed where the Falcon Brook entered the Thames, and the Battersea rate books contain the following series of entries for the Vicarage:

- April 1653-April 1655 "Mr. May".
- April 1656-May 1661 "Mrs. May, widow".
- Spring 1661—a late entry "Mast Comon", which the entries from April 1662 to April 1665 show to be a misrendering of Boaman or Bowman.
- April 1665 "Mrs. Bowman".
- May 1666-April 1668 "Mr. Parkhurst", with a marginal note 'vickridg' in May 1666, and a change of occupier later in 1668 "now Fening".
- April 1669 "Mr. Fenning", with a change during the year "now Mr. Horax."

April 1670-May 1672 "Mr. Horax" (alias Horaxe).

June 1673-May 1676 "Mrs. Horrax," with details in the last two years that may indicate her inability to pay her rates.

The fact that Temple left the parish in 1657 and that his successor as Vicar did not occupy the Vicarage presents no difficulty. His successor, the Rev. Symon Patrick, a bachelor, was already domestic chaplain to Sir Walter St. John, Lord of the Manor, and was residing in the Manor House. In 1662 he became Rector of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, but continued to hold the Battersea living, and put his brother, John, and William Lloyd, D.D., in charge during the periods 1662-71 and 1673-75 respectively. Whether these two deputies actually resided in the parish and, if so, where is not known. The reliability of the foregoing list is confirmed by the fact that Mr. Humphrey Morris, who is named in the lease of 1653 as holder of the property to the east and south of the Vicarage, appears in the right place in the rate books until 1666.

The Winchester diocesan records, now preserved in The Castle, Winchester, show that on the 28th of October, 1667, Carolus Parkhurst, as required by the thirty-sixth section of the Ecclesiastical Canons of 1603, signed the necessary Latin declaration in order to be "licentiatu ad erudiendum pueros in parochia de Battersey". Evidently he was a non-graduate layman, as were the other schoolmasters who were signing the same declaration in the same volume at that period; he would not have subscribed if his school had not been of much higher status than the contemporary dame-schools in Battersea at two pence a week; and presumably he understood the meaning of the Latin declaration that he signed. He had already been residing in the Vicarage for at least a year and a half, but he had come into the parish during 1662 and was listed in the rate book for 1663 as Mr Doctor Parkhurst. (The present writer has the impression that in the 17th and 18th centuries non-graduate lay schoolmasters were often addressed as Doctor—academically inaccurate, but etymologically correct.) He may have been conducting a school before he moved into the Vicarage and before he signed the declaration.

In his *Dissenters Memorial* Edmund Calamy gives much information about the Rev. Thomas Horrockes, M.A., who after about a year's tenancy by Mr. Fenning became the occupier of the Vicarage during 1669. After graduating B.A. and M.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge, this Lancashire man was ordained and taught in the free school at Romford. During this period he married Mary Fenning and had a daughter, Sarah. (See A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, Oxford, 1934, p. 278.) Later he became Vicar of Maldon, Essex, and gained the respect of the local nobility and gentry, among whom Calamy mentions Sir Walter St. John. (The St. Johns held the manor of Hatfield Peverel, some four miles from Maldon.) In 1662 he refused to conform under the Act of Uniformity. During the following years he was im-

prisoned, frequently tried, and assaulted, and he preached, on one occasion, through prison bars.

But the most detailed reference to Horrockes is found in the following "information," dated 2 June, 1664, about conventicles at Hertford:

Horrex late vicar of Maldon in Essexe, who hath bin severall times indited at y^e Assize in that County for holding Conventicles, is nowe prcher to y^e Anabaptsts of Hartford, who meete ev[ery] Sundaye at y^e house of on[e] Herles [? Hale], a ffarmer, cald Brickingtonbury, to y^e number of 500 at a time from y^e parts thereabout. These talke high y^t the time of their liberty draweth neare. They had a p[ro]phecy among them in Cromewills time, y^t god would bring in y^e King to doe his worke upon y^e earth, & y^t he should raigne 3 yeares, and then god would take y^e Kgdo[m] from him &c. And nowe say they, He hath gone to y^e utmost Linke of his chaine in passinge y^e late act agst g[ods] people: and they p[ro]mise themselves a change of y^e Govermt before y^e end of this yeare, and y^t they shall see the p[re]sent Parlimt lye in y^e dust. In order whereto they have p[ro]vided store of Armes, and they keepe y^e best horses y^t can bee gotten, & in greater number then is agreeable to their ranke. And Horrexe aforesd is to them as one of y^e Furys to spurre them onward in their madnes. He p[re]ches to them, y^t he comes not to them wth a sermon out of a booke, but wth that wch y^e lrd hath spoken to him; viz y^t y^e must not goe backe nor bee daunted wth any terrour, least gd spue the [m] out of his mouth.

The date, 2 June, 1644, is significant. The "late act agst gds people" mentioned in the information is the "Act to prevent and suppress seditious Conventicles"—the third act in the so-called Clarendon Code—which had received the royal assent on 17 May and was to come into force on 1 July. What Horrockes was doing was not at the moment illegal, but within a month he would be liable to the severe penalties of the Act, and the "information" about conventicles in London and Hertford was telling the authorities where they might find prospective law-breakers.

Eventually he settled in Battersea, the ratebooks providing a more precise date (1669) than Calamy records. It would be pleasant to suppose that Sir Walter's influence had something to do with his settlement in Battersea, but the fact that his immediate predecessor in the Vicarage had the same uncommon surname as Horrockes's wife imposes caution. Calamy records that in Battersea "he boarded and taught young gentlemen; among whom were two of the sons of Sir Walter St. John, Alderman Howe's sons, five of the Lordels, three of the Houblands &c and several others of good note." (Peter Houbland and Mr. Lordel were Battersea residents of Huguenot descent. Many members of these two families were prominent in the early history of

the Bank of England. It is difficult to identify the two sons of Sir Walter. Oliver (1661-79) could easily be one; Walter, born 1666, is a difficult case, and the younger sons are still more difficult.)

Under King Charles's Declaration of Indulgence, 15 March, 1672, Horrockes applied—as a Presbyterian, although he had been described in 1664 as the preacher to the Anabaptists of Hertford, who met every Sunday to the number of 500 at a time—for a licence (17 April), and obtained one (20 April) permitting him “to be a teacher of the congregation . . . in a room or rooms of his house . . . for the use of such as do not conform to the church of England. . . .” Unfortunately he enjoyed this liberty for a short time only, for he was buried in Battersea on 26 December, 1672. (Calamy errs in stating that he died about 1687, but the appearance of Mrs. Horrax in the rate book for three years from the spring of 1673 confirms the entry in the register of Battersea burials.)

The upshot of these details is (1) that, with a possible interruption of about a year during Fenning's occupation, about which there is no evidence either way, Battersea had a private school of good social and academic standing during a period of some six or seven years—a school which under Horrockes might rank among the minor Dissenting Academies; (2) that Battersea's first Dissenting Conventicle met in the Vicarage. Battersea Chapel is its spiritual descendant.

FRANK T. SMALLWOOD.

Commitment to Europe

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Monday 24th April and the theme will be “Our Commitment to Europe”. There will be a panel of speakers including Dr. Ernest A. Payne, Rev. Irwin J. Barnes and Rev. Norman Moon. Time will be allowed for discussion. The meeting will be held in the Institute Hall, Westminster Chapel, commencing with tea at 4.15 p.m. Admission to tea will be *by ticket only*, price 15p. Those hoping to attend should apply to Rev. Basil Amey, B.M.S., 93, Gloucester Place, London W1H 4AA, enclosing a postal order for 15p and a stamped addressed envelope. Replies will be sent *in April*.