

## SOULBURY PARISH.

THIS parish, with the hamlets hereinafter noticed, contains 4,460 acres, and 589 inhabitants. On the east side it is, partly, separated from Bedfordshire by the river Ouse. The London and North Western Railway, and the Grand Junction Canal intersect it—the former occupying 23A. 2R. 6P.; and the latter, 13A. 3R. 3P. The rateable value of the parish is £7,732. Soulbury parish is 7 miles in length, and contains, it is said, upwards of 17 miles of roads. The *Village*, which is situated 3 miles N.W. from Leighton Buzzard, is about half-a-mile in length, and the houses are mostly ancient and covered with thatch. The southern end of it is pleasantly seated on the brow of a hill, from which issues a copious spring of pure water. The country around is well wooded.

*Soleberie* was divided into several distinct partitions before the Conquest, and the first Norman owners of them were William Fitz-Ansculf, Milo Crispin, Hugh de Beauchamp, Gozelin Brito, the Countess Judith, Godwin de Bedel, and Alrick Bolest. The largest estate belonged to Fitz-Ansculf, and the Hugh de Beauchamp's second son, Pagan, held it under him. It continued in the Beauchamp family until the forfeiture of John de Beauchamp, in the reign of King Henry III. The Mansell family soon afterwards held an estate in Soulbury, and presented to the Rectory. In 1304 (33 Edward I.) lands, messuages, meadows, and rents in Soulbury and in Liscombe, Chelmscote, and Hollendon, in the same parish, were passed by fine to Robert Lovett, Esq., and Sarah, his wife. These lands, &c., constituted the chief estate here, and included the patronage of the Rectory of Soulbury.

Richard de Lovet, the ancestor of the purchaser of this estate, came to England with the Norman Conqueror; and William, his son, was Master of the Wolf-hounds to that monarch. Henry Lovet was Knighted, and married Isabella, daughter and heir of Lord Beauchamp, of Hatch. Their son was Sir John Lovet, Knt.

Robert Lovett, Esq., the first possessor of the Soulbury estate, of this family, was son of Sir Robert Lovett, Knt., of Rushton and Newton, Co. Warwick; and Sarah, his wife, was daughter and heiress of Sir Roger de Turville, of Holmedon, Co. Northampton. Sir Robert Lovett, of Liscombe, married for his second wife, Anne, daughter of Richard Saunders, Esq., of Dinton. The issue of this marriage were the ancestors of the Lovetts of Liscombe, Tawstock, and Dublin, including Dame Lettice, wife of Thomas Pigott, Esq., of Doddershall, who survived to a great age, and was sister to many distinguished ladies, being one of the ten daughters of Sir Robert Lovett. Jonathan Lovett, Esq., the head of a younger branch of the family, that had been settled for a long period at Kingwell, in the county of Tipperary, succeeded to the Buckinghamshire estate, upon the failure of the elder branch, and was created a Baronet in 1781. He died in 1812, leaving his daughter and heiress (the late Miss Lovett) to succeed to his estates. This lady died August 18th, 1855, and by her will left her possessions to her cousin, Phillips Cosby Lovett, Esq., who is the present owner of them. Thus the manor and estate has continued since the opening of the 14th century till the present day in the uninterrupted possession of the Lovett family.

Colonel Henry Hanmer, Esq., — Hayter, Esq., Mrs. Loxey, Mrs. Millard, and W. Pulsford, Esq., are also landowners in this parish.

The *Living* is a Perpetual Curacy, in the gift of the Lord of the Manor, and incumbency of the Rev. John Hart. The annual income consists of a rent-charge of £100, issuant out of the Liscombe estate, and a

money payment of about £10—of which £7 8s. is paid by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. There is no Parsonage: the Incumbent resides at Wing.

The advowson was vested in the Mansells before the year 1231. It was afterwards acquired by the **family** of Lovett. In 1499, a license was granted for appropriating Soulbury Rectory to the Abbey of Woburn, Co. Beds., and to grant to that convent the advowson thereof. It was accordingly so appropriated, and a Vicarage was thereupon ordained, to which the convent presented four several times; but after the institution of a Vicar in 1537, the succeeding incumbents have only the title of Curates. After the Dissolution the advowson, &c., became vested in the King: the impropriation was of very small value. King Edward VI. granted the Rectory and Church of Soulbury to Richard Malorye and William Smith. Robert Lovett, Esq., of Liscombe, son of Sir Robert Lovett, in his will, makes mention of a deed, dated in 1698 (executed by the said Robert Lovett, and Edward Lovett, of Tavistock, Co. Devon, his brother) by which it was settled that £30 a-year should be paid, with all such advantages as had been allowed in the House of Liscombe; and if not, then £40. It appears that according to an arrangement made between the Crown and the Lovett **family** (under which the latter claim the sole right of appointing the minister), the Curates, after the Reformation were domesticated in the **family** of Lovett, at Liscombe.

The *Church* (All Saints), which stands on an eminence, and is chiefly in the Decorated style, is a handsome object when viewed from the southern entrance into the village especially. It has a massive tower, nave, side aisles, south porch, and chancel. The tower, which is embattled and contains six bells and a clock, is at the west end of the nave, and opens into it, as well as the north aisle (which is as long as the nave and tower) by two good arches. The porch is handsome and embattled, and ornamented with crocketed pinnacles. There was formerly a door on the north side. The aisles and nave have a plain parapet. The priests' doorway, in the chancel, is doubly feathered; the roofs of the nave and aisles are covered with lead; and the chancel is tiled. Two arches on each side separate the aisles from the nave; and there are four clerestory windows of three lights each. The tower has a good three-light window in each side of the upper stage, a handsome four-light window in the west face of the lower story, and a good two-light one on the south side. The south aisle is lighted by four good windows of three lights each, and contains a piscina, which proves it to have been a Chapel. The window at the east end of the aisle was formerly filled with stained glass. There are five windows in the north, or longest aisle. The tower arch is lofty; the roofs of the nave and aisles are open timber. The font is octagon, with a shield and a lozenge alternately in the middle of each compartment enclosed by a quatrefoil; and the cover is of wood, rising from an octagon base, as a pyramid. The nave is seated with the old heavy plain oak benches, and the pulpit and reading desk are of oak, and plain. The chancel is large and approached through an acutely pointed arch beneath which is a heavy screen. It is lighted by five good windows, that at the east end being of five lights, divided by four transoms into 23 compartments. This was erected about 1710, at the cost and under the direction



of Robert Lovett, Esq. Each compartment has stained glass rims, and in the centre of the window are the arms of Lovett, and the initial letters of the names of the donor and artist: the latter was Richard Staniford, a mason. The ceiling is coved, and immediately above the communion table it is painted to represent the sky with the Dove in the centre, surrounded by cherubs.

Amongst the memorials of the Lovett family—over the communion-table is a brass plate inscribed to Colonel John Lovett, M.P., who died in 1710; his wife, the Hon. Mary Verney, daughter of Lord Fermanagh, of Middle Claydon; and their two sons and a daughter. On the north side of the chancel is a mural monument, with a pyramid of black marble, in memory of Major Verney Lovett (son of Colonel Lovett and the Hon. Mary Verney), who died in 1771. A brass affixed to the south wall is inscribed to "Thomas Lovet, Arm. ob. 1491." and contains a long inscription, mostly in Latin. This plate was originally placed in the Turville Chapel, in Biddesden Abbey, whence it was removed when that Abbey was destroyed in 1704. Biddesden Abbey was founded by Sir William de Turville in the reign of Henry II. Sarah, daughter and heir of Sir Nicholas de Turville having married, in 1304, Robert Lovett, Esq., of Liscombe, the Abbey came to the Lovetts, at the death of Sir Nicholas in 1309.

On the south side of the chancel is a handsome mural monument to Robert Lovett, Esq. Within a recess between pilasters are the figures of a man and woman kneeling at a desk, and affixed to the pediment above are three shields of arms. Within the communion-rails, on the south side, is a monument of Coade's artificial stone, having a female figure reclining over an urn, inscribed "A filial offering to maternal worth." Lower down on trefoil-headed panels, resembling those on the sides of ancient tombs, are many inscriptions to the Lovett family, in continuation of those on a tablet erected by Sir Jonathan Lovett, Bart., in memory of his mother, Eleanor Lovett (who died in 1786), daughter of Daniel Mansergh, of the County of Cork. There is a handsome marble monument at the top of which is an urn, on the south side of the chancel. This is a memorial of Robert Lovett, Esq., who died in 1740.

A mural monument, with an urn, a flame issuant from it, and a seraph bearing a celestial crown was erected by Lettice, daughter of Robert Lovett, Esq., of Liscombe, and wife of Thomas Pigott, Esq., of Doddershall, in memory of her father and mother, in 1701. There is a tablet inscribed to the Rev. Verney Lovett, who died in 1770.

On the north wall of the chancel is a white marble tablet inscribed to the Rev. John Sambee, who was incumbent of this parish 53 years, and died in 1728, aged 80; and Mary, his wife, who died in 1723, aged 77. A slab, in the floor of the nave is inscribed to the Rev. Edmund Wodley, Curate of Soulbury (deceased in 1808, aged 71), his wife, daughter, and son—the latter being the Rev. William Wodley, who departed this life in 1837, aged 71. At the upper end of the north aisle are the remains of an altar-monument of free-stone, supported by pillars of the Ionic order, supposed to have been designed for one of the Mallet family. On the pavement were formerly the effigies of a man and woman in brass, and an inscription beneath the figures soliciting prayers for the souls of John Mallet (who died in 1617) gentleman, and Alice, his wife. Beneath

the effigies of a man and woman, inserted in an ancient sepulchral slab, is an inscription requesting the reader to "Pray for ye Soules of John Turnay and Agnes his wife."

There is a small *Methodist Chapel*, which was erected in 1838. The *School* is endowed by Robert Lovett, Esq., and the Rev. John Sambee. Twenty-four children of both sexes are instructed free in reading, writing, and arithmetic; but the master has the privilege of taking private scholars to board and lodge in the house. The school-house and the master's residence form a long narrow range of red brick buildings, covered with tiles. In the centre of the building is this inscription:—"Lovett's Charity School and School-House, 1724." The present master is Mr. William Blundy, a Licentiate of the Royal College of Preceptors. Miss Blundy is schoolmistress. Opposite the school is an immense Boulder-stone—a shapeless mass, of a very hard and durable nature.

*Charities.*—By his will in 1710, *Robert Lovett, Esq.* bequeathed £300 to the Rev. John Sambee (then incumbent of Soulbury) and others, to be laid out to the best advantage for the benefit of the poor. This sum was received by Mr Sambee in 1712, after the death of the testator, and soon after an amicable suit was instituted in the Court of Chancery for the purpose of obtaining the direction of the Court as to the application of the interest. By the decree of the Master of the Rolls, in 1728, it was ordered that the said charity monies, after deducting costs, should be laid out in the purchase of lands for the benefit of the charity—one moiety to be paid to a schoolmaster for teaching 24 boys and girls of the poor inhabitants of the parish to read, write, and cast accounts, and to be instructed in the Catechism of the Church of England; and the other moiety of the rents to be annually applied to placing out boys as apprentices. The interest of the £300 from 1712 to 1728 amounted to £240, of which, after deducting the costs of the Court, there remained £177. The before-mentioned *Rev. John Sambee*, by his will proved in 1728, devised to certain trustees all that his new built messuage and tenement, in Soulbury, with all houses, buildings, and gardens, &c., thereunto belonging, that they should convert and occupy the room of the said new building called the school-room for the keeping of the charity-school therein, and should dispose of the rents and issues of the other part of the said messuage or tenement and premises for the benefit of the said charity-school; and the testator bequeathed the residue of his personal estate for the same purpose. In 1749 the sum of £844 was raised by the sale of stock and expended in the purchase of land in this parish. At the inclosure of open fields in Soulbury and Hollingdon in 1772, an allotment of about 34 acres was awarded to the trustees of this charity in lieu of the charity estate; and this allotment was then exchanged with the Lord of the Manor for his tithes of corn, grass, hay, &c., issuing out of lands in the lordship of Bragenham. When the Charity Commissioners made their Report, these tithes amounted to £72 17s. 10d. There are besides, about 2½ acres of land in Stewkley belonging to this charity.

The property of the *Stapleford Bridge Charity* consists of four houses and 20A. 3R. 21P. of land which was awarded to the trustees in lieu of their lands and common rights. The rents and profits are applied to the



support of the bridge. *Thomas Tarbucks*, in 1673, left a rent-charge of 12s. a-year, 10s. of the same to be paid to the clergyman for preaching a sermon, and the remaining 2s. to be given to the parish clerk. At an inclosure of common lands in 1811, the Commissioners awarded 1A. 1R. 25P. in respect of this charity. The sermon is preached on Easter Monday. *Innocent Harris*, by will in 1660 left a yearly rent-charge of £2 11s. to the poor; and there are also two cottages belonging to the charity.

**BRAGENHAM HAMLET.**—The hamlet and manor of Bragenham, or Braggenham, lies at the N.E. angle of the parish of Soulbury, about 3 miles from the parish church. A small portion of the ancient *Watling Street*—now forming the road from Dunstable to Fenny and Stony Stratford, passes through this place (*See p. 27*). At Bragenham was an ancient *Chapel* which has long since disappeared, together with the village. In the reign of Elizabeth the place was described as consisting of ten families; now it consists of one grazing farm. There was anciently a family residing here, who either received their name from the place itself, or imparted their name to the hamlet. This family of De Bradenham, or Bragenham, appears to have been of some account, although there is no positive proof extant of the manorial rights which they possessed.

Bragenham manor was purchased of the Theeds in 1735, by Edward, Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh, Co. Warwick, the lord of Leighton Buzzard (Beds), and the possessor of very large estates in this neighbourhood. The Hon. Mary Leigh died possessed of the estate in 1806, and when Lipscomb wrote, Chandos, Lord Leigh, was lord of the place. The farm has since been sold, and is now the property of Colonel Henry Hanmer, whose manor of Smewnes (Great Brickhill parish) extends partly into Soulbury parish (*See page 501*).

*Stock Grove*, the seat of Colonel Hanmer, is in this hamlet, close to the borders of Bedfordshire. The house is a handsome modern white brick structure, delightfully situated in a well wooded district, and in a pleasant park of about fifty acres. The spire of Leighton Buzzard church, which is seen from the grounds, just above the tall trees, is an interesting object. The Bragenham Manor-house—now occupied by a farmer—is a genteel residence, of red brick, in a good situation on high ground. At Bragenham are extensive brick and tile works, the property of Colonel Hanmer.

*Stableford Mill*, on the river Ouse, about 1½ mile N.E. from the parish church, is very ancient, but the adjoining residence is modern. The mill, &c., is now in the occupation of Mr. Gabriel Bull.

**CHELMSCOTE HAMLET.**—Chelmscote, or as it is usually pronounced, *Chemscott*, is a manor of about 300 acres, adjoining Linslade, 1½ mile east of Soulbury village. The place consists of one farm. The manor was in the possession of the Lucys as early as the reign of King John. Geoffrey de Lucy held Chelmscote manor, as well as Cublington, in the reign of King Henry III., for in 1343, he, with Catharine his wife, obtained a license from Thomas Beke, Bishop of Lincoln, empowering them to make an Oratory or Chapel at their mansion at Chelmscote. In 1459, Sir William Lucy died seised of Chelmscote, his next heirs being

his sister, Elizabeth, wife of Roger Corbet, Esq., and William Vaux, Esq., his nephew. The moiety of the estate which belonged to the Vaux family, subsequently came to the Corbets, and the manor afterwards passed, with Linslade, until the death of Sir Vincent Corbet, Bart., in 1688, without issue; when Chelmscote and a portion of Linslade, came to Andrew Corbet, Esq., his younger brother, who also died childless. Descending afterwards, with Linslade, it became vested in the same family. William Pulsford, Esq., the present owner, purchased Chelmscote with Linslade, in 1826 (*See page 705*). Some of the lands in Chelmscote belong to the Lovett family.

The remains of the mansion of the Lucys have been converted into a farm residence, a portion of which has quite an ecclesiastical aspect, and was in all probability the Chapel erected about 1343. At the west end of the building are two strong buttresses of stone; on the north and south sides are arched doorways cased with stone; and in two of the present rooms are openings in the wall, looking towards the east, which appear to have been hagioscopes. There are traces of a moat. Chelmscote manor farm is in the occupation of Mr. John Deverell, in whose family it has been for many years. An ancient road-way may be traced close past the house, which led to a ford and fulling-mill on the Ouse. The mill was pulled down long ago, but there are fields in the vicinity known as Fulling-fields.

In a field adjoining the farm-house are some remains of earthworks and embankments, of which nothing is known.

HOLLINGDON.—The hamlet of Hollingdon, or Hollenden, lies about 1 mile S.W. of the parish church, and consists of six farm and eighteen cottage residences, divided into Upper and Lower Hollingdon. The latter portion is seated in a deep hollow. The greater part of the hamlet belongs to the Liscombe estate. *Holendone* is mentioned in Domesday Book.

*Liscombe House* has been the seat of the Lovett family for between five and six centuries. It stands in a delightful situation, on rising ground, in a park of about 200 acres, abounding with fine oaks, and diversified by a pleasing variety of surface, extremely rich in vegetation. The mansion is very large and quadrangular, and encloses a spacious court of irregular buildings. One side of this court is occupied by a chapel, long since disused. Robert Lovett, Esq., lord of Liscombe, founded a Chantry in the "Church of Liscombe," in 1301, as appears by the extract from Bishop de Alderby's Register, in the archives of Lincoln:—"Robto' Lovet D'no de Liscombe Epus concessit here Cantuarium in Ecclesiam de Liscombe."\* The chapel alluded to, which, from its style of architecture, appears to have been erected about the middle or latter end of the 14th century, probably occupies the site of the older edifice in which Robert Lovet founded the chantry; for, from the above extract from the Bishop of Lincoln's Register, it would appear that there was a "Church" in existence at Liscombe, in 1301. The house is of much later date than the chapel, no part of it appearing to be older than the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The windows have been modernised. The principal front, which is of great length, and has two entrances, is castellated, and has a

\* Lipscomb says that this Chapel "was much resorted to, especially for the celebration of marriages, previous to the alteration of the Marriage Laws."



pediment in the centre supported by two turrets, and a low tower at each end. The chief apartments are of fine proportions and very handsome.

The pictures include a half-length on panel of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; Lord Chief-Justice Sir Edward Montague, Knt, by *Holbein*; Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, by *Kneller*; Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, beheaded, temp. King Charles I.; Sir Nicholas Crispe, Knt.; John Russell, first Earl of Bedford; Right Hon. Christopher Lovett, Lord Mayor of Dublin; Sir Jonathan Lovett, Bart., and many other members of the Lovett family; Sir Edmund Verney, Standard-Bearer to the King at the Battle of Edge Hill; Lady Verney, his wife; the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon; Lord and Lady Fermanagh; Sir Bevil Verney; and several others, including some of the ladies of the family. There are also, a portrait of Nell Gwynne, heads of Titus Oates, Archbishop Sancroft, and Hugo Grotius; a view of Liscombe Old House on copper; and ancient views of Doddershall, the seat of the Pigotts. There is a plate of Liscombe House in Lipscomb's History of Buckinghamshire.

This is an extract from The History and Topography of Buckinghamshire by James Joseph Sheahan published December 1861