

The Churches of Bix

By E. A. GREENING LAMBORN

*No sign of habitation meets the eye,
Only some ancient furrows I discern,
And mouldering mounds, and from them sadly learn
That hereabouts men used to live and die.*

THE desecrated church of St. James, Bix Brand (PLATES XVIII and XIX), lies isolated in a combe, where the box trees from which it was named no longer grow, at the northern end of the parish. Some enclosures adjoining it, with gooseberry bushes growing wild, suggest the sites of vanished cottages, but of the manor house shown in Morden's map drawn for the 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia* not a vestige remains.

The walls, 2 feet 9 inches thick, are of the local flint with freestone dressings, the quoins at the eastern angles of the chancel and nave, with the jambs of the original windows, south door and chancel arch, being of the small cubical type characteristic of the Norman period, finely grained, like Caen stone, and no doubt brought up the river to Henley and carted hither. The building is now roofless, but the eastern gable of the chancel shows the original pitch and suggests that the Norman roof remained to the end. There was originally only a single small window high up in each of the side walls of nave and chancel, and probably only one in the end walls. The jambs of those remaining show no trace of saddle-bars nor glazing grooves; they are rebated internally, and may have been fitted with shutters. This absence of glass explains the paucity of the openings, though defence was, no doubt, also a consideration in the minds of the builders; the church, with its comparatively large nave, would have afforded in time of need an almost impregnable shelter to the whole village. A lancet window replaced a Norman one in the south wall of the chancel in the thirteenth century, and Decorated windows were inserted in the east wall of the chancel and the north and south walls of the nave in the fourteenth century, which were deprived of their tracery and reconstructed late in the eighteenth century.

The church was unroofed and abandoned in 1875. The tiles and font and some pieces of early sixteenth century glass, with the registers¹ and a memorial

¹ The registers, according to Kelly, date from 1577 they are said by the Rector to contain nothing of interest.



A. The Church in 1875, from a photograph now at Bix Rectory.

By courtesy of the Rector and Churchwardens.



B. The same Church in 1905. *Ph. Rev. T. Owen Floyd.*



C. The same Church in 1936. *Ph. Mr. P. S. Spokes.*

THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, BIX BRAND.

PLATE XIX



A. Interior, from the W. end, 1905.



B. Exterior, from the SW., 1905.

THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, BIX BRAND.

Phh. Rev. T. Owen Floyd.

tablet to the Rev. Henry Heathcote, B.D., twenty years rector, who died in September, 1822, were removed to the new church built by the Patron, the 6th Earl of Macclesfield, near the high road to which the village had been attracted.

The chancel, 13 feet 6 inches by 9 feet 9 inches, has an east window with fourteenth century sill and four-centred arch into which a brick frame and splays have been inserted, probably in the late eighteenth century, when the sill was raised by 18 inches, the old tracery being used as filling.

In the north wall is a twelfth century window of one narrow, deeply splayed light, its round head cut from a single stone, and in the south the lower part of an early thirteenth century lancet light, the upper part of which has fallen in. The jambs of this window were carried down to form a sedile. East of it is the four-centred arch of a fifteenth century piscina, the bowl of which, picked up in the churchyard, is now preserved at the rectory.

The early twelfth century chancel arch is semi-circular, of a single order, without imposts, and only 4 feet in width. The middle voussoir in the crown of the arch has fallen out, and a deep crack runs up into the gable above.

The nave, 42 feet 8 inches by 18 feet 2 inches, retains its south wall intact with its original doorway of the early twelfth century, round-headed, of two orders, with a tunnel for the door-bar in the eastern jamb. Two holes in the outer face of the wall on either side of the doorway, and a groove in the head of the arch may be traces of the purlins and collar of a vanished porch. The doorway is unusually placed, 16 feet 6 inches from the east end, 21 feet 6 inches from the west. The wall west of it is blank, but east of it, below the blocked-up arch of a Norman light, is the opening, with sill and inner western jamb, of a fourteenth century window into which a frame of brick was inserted in the late eighteenth century; and east, again, the jambs of a similar window with brick splays and lintelled head of timber, also an eighteenth century reconstruction.

The west end of the north wall of the nave has fallen; one original Norman window, its external round arch missing, remains opposite the door, and east of it a brick-framed opening of a window inserted in the late eighteenth century.

The central portion of the west wall is in ruins. At the angles are low, deep, coupled buttresses of brick of late eighteenth century date, suggesting that this end of the building showed signs at that period of the fate which has now overtaken it.

In the east wall, on the north side of the chancel arch, is a recess, 5 feet wide by 1 foot deep, with segmental arch of the fifteenth century, probably the reredos of a nave altar; there are traces of the original colouring on the chamfer of arch and jambs. On the south side is a narrower recess with four-centred head, also of the fifteenth century, which may originally have been a niche for an image, or possibly the approach to a rood-loft stair, but was lined or repaired

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with brick in the eighteenth century and plastered within, probably to serve as an entrance to the pulpit. Two hold-fasts, driven into wooden plugs, secured the boards painted with the Creed and Commandments which took the place of the Rood after the Reformation.

The eastern half of the north wall, to a height of 6 feet, has been thinned to half its original thickness. The recess so formed has a plastered coving above and has apparently been lined with bricks, now purloined. It may have been designed originally for the tombs of the founders of the nave altar and adapted in the eighteenth century to the construction of a large box-pew for the rector's family.

In the south wall a row of holes, 3 feet from the ground, indicate where the joists of the nave benches were fixed.

The roughcast and plaster both inside and out are of various dates. On the west face of the north jamb of the chancel arch the thin plaster of the twelfth century with red colouring upon it may be seen beneath the thicker coat of the fifteenth and the still thicker and coarser layer of the eighteenth.

An elder tree, 10 inches in diameter, is growing in the chancel out of the foundations of the east wall and rises above the eastern gable. Another, 1 foot thick, grows in the nave from the foundations of the chancel arch and rises high above the side walls. A photograph (PLATE XIX A) taken by the Rev. T. Owen Floyd at the beginning of the present century shows these trees as small bushes.

In the churchyard are some headstones of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and under the south wall of the chancel the low altar tomb of Sebastian Marsh, M.A., rector 1682-1729, of whom White Kennett,¹ says that he was of Hart Hall and had been vicar of Ambrosden from 1671 until presented to the rectory of Bix Brand.

A photograph (PLATE XVIII A) now at the rectory, taken shortly before the church was abandoned, shows a view of it from the south-east. The chancel has an eighteenth century east window with a wooden frame dividing it into two lights with a spandrel above, and a lancet window in the south wall. The nave has a square window with lintelled head and another similar to that in the chancel but with a wooden transom at the springing of the arch. There is a south porch with a round-arched doorway without imposts and of one order, obviously of the eighteenth century, and a square western bell-cote with shingled sides and pyramidal roof, like that at Ibstone.

This is the church described by J. H. Parker,² as 'a small poor church, consisting of chancel and nave with a wooden bell-cote on the west gable. The walls are Norman and some of the small Norman windows remain: there is one

¹ *Parochial Antiquities*, II, 403.

² *Architectural Topography*, 1850.

lancet window, the others are modern, and very bad. The chancel arch is small round-headed Norman, and has a squint on each side of it almost as large as the arch, but not continued to the ground, and now blocked up.' The northern recess, at least, which is actually a foot wider than the arch, can never have been a squint, as it backs partly against the thickness of the north wall of the chancel.

The history of the advowson is inextricably bound up with that of the neighbouring parish of Bix Gibwyn. Each had its own church, under separate patronage; but both livings were poor ones, sometimes held by the same incumbent, and eventually were consolidated as one benefice, either at the Reformation or shortly before it. The earliest Register extant in the Diocesan Registry at Lincoln is that of Bishop Grossteste, in whose second year, 1237, Isabella, Countess of Oxford, Lady of the Manor of Bix Gibwyn, presented Thomas de Belesham to that living, and Sir Robert Brand, Lord of the Manor of Bix Brand, presented Robert Brand to his church on the resignation of Ralph, the last rector, in 1248. His successor, Walter Kardun, 1263, was presented to Bix Gibwyn in 1264 and was, apparently, permitted by Bishop Gravesend to hold the two livings in plurality.

During his incumbency, in 1275, the bishop, in consideration of the poverty of the canons of Dorchester, issued an order that the abbot might appropriate the church of Bix Brand at the next vacancy of the living. The canons seem to have interpreted this as permission to appropriate both the churches held by the then incumbent, for, at his demise in 1278, Robert Brien, Lord of the Manor of Bix Gibwyn, brought a suit against the abbot and the Earl of Oxford, as lord of the fee, for the right of presentation to the church, and, recovering the patronage, presented Ralph de Hanslope. In 1298 Peter Brien presented James Paynel, and his successor in the lordship of the manor, Sir Richard Damory, presented John de Bladon in 1315. Thenceforward, so long as the church existed, the patronage was in the Stonors.

The living, however, must have been a very poor one, for in the Returns of the Taxation of Pope Nicholas, 1291, it is not mentioned, being, presumably, under the taxable minimum of five marcs. For the same reason it is not returned in the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1340.

Bix Brand, in these returns, is stated to be in the patronage of the Abbot of Dorchester and to be worth ten marcs, £6 13s. 4d. per annum. The church must have been served at this period by the canons, if the abbey was to derive any financial benefit from the appropriation. The bishop had stipulated that a vicarage should be instituted, but only 'when it seemed desirable' and 'not without the free consent of the monastery.'¹ Miss K. Major, the Diocesan

¹ *Lincoln Record Society*, II, 227-8, and information from Miss K. Major.

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Archivist, suggests that this was never done and that the church was served by curates for two centuries until consolidated with Bix Gibwyn, since all the institutions recorded are to that benefice until 1484, when the canons presented Thomas Day to the church of Bix Brand. Their next presentation, of John Halifax in 1522, was their last; his successor, Sir John Darmon, was presented to both livings by Walter Stonor, Lord of the Manors.

The parochial duties cannot have been onerous, for a local jury told the Assessors of the Ninth¹ that most of the land in the parish was unoccupied, 'jacet frisca,' in 1340; and Richard Pypard of Lachford, John Hore of Dorchester and their colleagues, collectors of the subsidy granted in the sixth year of Henry VI, 1428, reported that nothing was forthcoming from Bix Brand because there were no inhabitants.²

This, however, cannot be literally true, for among a bundle of court rolls of this date at the Public Record Office³ is a View of Frankpledge of 12 May 10 Henry VI in which William Laurence, tithing-man of Bixbrond (Laurence's Farm preserves his name), presents three offenders against the assize of ale and reports that the parish has no stocks. 'Therefore it is commanded that they have them before the Feast of Michaelmas under penalty of 40 shillings.' Bix is not included in the list of rectories appropriated to the Abbey of Dorchester in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII, nor among the possessions of the abbey in the Ministers' Accounts printed in Addington's *Abbey Church of St. Peter and St. Paul*. Both manors had been acquired by the Stonor family and the advowsons, apparently, with them. By this time they had been consolidated as one rectory, their united value, as stated in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (II, 167), being £10 5s. 6d. John Darmon was rector of both parishes. He died in 1545 and his successor, Gawin Graunger, was the first incumbent to be admitted by the bishop of the newly-constituted see of Oxford. Sir Walter Stonor was then the patron of the united livings.⁴

Graunger's immediate successors, however, do not appear in the Oxford Register, for Elizabeth kept the see vacant and the local incumbents were admitted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. White Kennett⁵ quotes an entry in the register of Archbishop Parker of 22 March, 1564. 'John Barker, scholar of the University of Cambridge, admitted to the churches of Byxgybbyn and Byxbrond at the deprivation of David Morles, the last incumbent, on the

¹ *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, p. 137.

² *Feudal Aids*, VI, 372.

³ Bundle 212: 4. A transcript, with translation, of this document was kindly provided by Mr. S. C. Ratcliff of the P.R.O.

⁴ *Diocesan Register*, I, folio 15.

⁵ *Parochial Antiquities*, II, 404.

presentation of George Mantell, gentleman.¹ Mantell was probably the agent of Francis Stonor, the patron, who, as a papist, could not present directly.

For the next hundred years there are no entries in the diocesan register until in 1682, on the death of Thomas Newlin, Sebastian Marsh was presented by William Marsh of Oxford acting for Thomas Stonor, of Stonor, esquire.¹ In 1720 one Toovey of Howe in Watlington was in possession of the advowson and transferred it to Thomas Parker, Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor, 1st Earl of Macclesfield, whose descendant, the 7th earl, is the present patron.

A new rectory has recently been built near the new church on the hill. The old one, in the combe, dates mainly from the incumbency of the Rev. John Cooper (1785-1802) as we gather from an entry in the Diary of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powis: '25 Nov. 1790. Walked to see Mr. Cooper's place at Bix before his alterations which he had just begun. His shrubbery and root-house finished last summer: very pretty. In the last some pretty verses of his own writing.'

It must have been in Cooper's time, or perhaps a little later, that the two pictures in painted glass now in the aisle windows were brought to Bix. They are of French work, of the early sixteenth century, closely resembling the glass at Shiplake which came from the Abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omer at the Revolution and was given to the vicar of Shiplake by his friend John Palmer Boteler in 1828 and leaded into its present position by Willement.² Mrs. Atkins Wright of Crowsley and the Rev. A. Howman also secured part of the spoil of St. Omer, and the Bix glass very possibly came from the same source.

One picture represents the Miracle of Cana. The other shows a merchant or a pilgrim, in a conical cap with a brooch in its turned-up rim, with his wife in the lappet head-dress of the period of Louis XII, and his daughter with hair unbound kneeling behind him, being received by an old man. Their identity has so far defied rational conjecture.

The font from the old church lies derelict in the new churchyard. It is of the tub-shaped Norman form, and has lost its lead and its rim.

The church of Bix Gibwyn must have stood somewhere on the hill. Like many hill churches it was dedicated to St. Michael. In Christopher Saxton's map of Oxfordshire in the 1607 edition of Camden's *Britannia* both Bix Brand and Bix Gebon are shown as parishes with churches; but in Morden's map in the editions of 1695 and 1753 'Beckes' is marked only as a hamlet of Bix Brand, with neither church nor manor house. In the account of Bix Gibwen in Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary*, 3rd ed., 1835, the church is said to be in ruins. Parker, in *Ecclesiastical Topography*, 1850, dismisses it curtly as 'ecclesia destructa.' These descriptions suggest that in the early part of the last century the site, at

¹ Diocesan Register, III, folio 88.

² *Works of Thomas Willement*, privately printed, 1840.

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least, was known, but no memory of it now remains in the parish. The oldest inhabitant, aged 87, has never heard of it. Meade Falkner (*Murray's Guide*, 1894) says that it is marked by a yew tree near the high road. But the only yew now visible is in the garden of the Manor Farm, and that is obviously less than a hundred years old. Human bones have been dug up on the site now occupied by Broad's cottages at Bix Bottom; but the evidence of the old maps¹ is clear that Bix Gibwen was much nearer to Henley, and the high road.

References to the church in the Bishops' Register had ceased before the end of the seventeenth century.

A NOTE ON THE MANORS

The peculiar interest of the manorial history of Bix is its association with a number of great lawyers, judges and officials of the Royal Exchequer, at least five of whom, Robert de Vere, Alexander de Swerford, William de Raleigh, John de Stonor and Thomas Parker, are important enough to find a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Two manors of Bix appear in Domesday Book,² one among the lands of Walter Giffard, the Conqueror's cousin and the great landholder of Bucks., the other at the end of the Oxfordshire list among the manors held in serjeanty by various royal officials; the first was afterwards distinguished as Bix Gibwen, the second as Bix Brand. Each was assessed at $2\frac{1}{2}$ hides and valued at £3, and each had seven ploughlands, three acres of meadow and twelve acres of wood; but the second supported ten families to the other's seven, and had six of its ploughlands in use while the first had only four.

The Hugo who held this, with many other manors, of Walter Giffard, was that Hugh Bolebec who was tenant in chief of Rycote and who took his surname, like Walter's father Osbern Bolebec,³ from the place of that name near Fécamp. As will be seen, he was an ancestor of the Earls of Oxford, and so of many now living who claim descent from the family of Vere.

Of Hervey, who held the other manor, and of his official duties nothing is known. Domesday Book, 155a, records that Hervey received the profits of half a hide of waste in Vernevelde⁴ in the King's manor of Benson which adjoined Bix, and he may have been the Hervey Legatus, the Pope's legate,⁵ who held Ibstone, a few miles northward. It is, at least, an interesting coincidence that

¹ Of which there is a unique collection in the Printer's Record Room at the University Press in Oxford.

² D.B. 158a, 161a.

³ Walter's own surname referred to his chubby features: gifard, joufloue = a cook's boy; cf. Pauncefort = paunch-face.

⁴ Fernfield. Russels Water Common still answers this description.

⁵ Papal legates had been invited into England in 1070 to assist in the reorganization of the Church. H. W. C. Davis, *England under the Normans*, p. 48.

the church there is almost exactly similar in plan, size and date, to that of Bix, though the chancel was rebuilt and considerably enlarged in the thirteenth century. Even the fonts correspond. A papal legate might be expected to set an example of church building; and this would explain the presence of early churches on such small and unimportant manors.

Hervey's successors in Bix were the family who took their name from the place. In the list of the manors held of the Honour of Wallingford, in the Red Book of the Exchequer, in 1166, Hugh the son of Osbert, and, in 1196, Peter de Bix are returned as holding there the half knight's fee at which the manor was assessed. According to Dr. H. E. Salter, a document in the Osney Cartulary records that Peter's son, Hugh de Bix, about 1220, gave to Osney his manor of Aplehanger in Goring, which in 1224 the Abbey surrendered for 100 marcs, to his widow Matilda, from whom it was to descend to Emma, the wife of Robert Brand.

The Fine Rolls of 1223¹ serve to explain this arrangement by recording a payment of 80 marcs by Matthew Brand that he might have the custody and marriage of the heir of Hugo de Bix. She, obviously, was Emma, and Matthew married her to his son. So Robert Braunt is found in the *Testa de Neville* (p. 113), a few years later, holding the manor to which the name of his family was henceforth attached. He already held land in Benson and was sheriff of Berkshire in 1232.² He was dead when the Hundred Rolls were compiled in 1279, for they record³ that William Quartermain held one acre of meadow for one shilling from Richard Russell of Clare and he of the heirs of Robert Brand. John Brand had succeeded him at Benson.

The Brands retained possession of Bix until the end of the century. According to the Red Book John Brand was holding the manor in 1276 and Maud Brand in 1300 when a list, printed in the Boarstall Cartulary,⁴ was made of the knight's fees held under Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, Lord of the Honour of Wallingford, at his death in that year.

Soon afterwards it was acquired by John Stonor, the great lawyer and judge, ancestor of Lord Camoys, whose tomb is in Dorchester Abbey and who, in the early fourteenth century, was employing his large professional earnings to increase his paternal estate at Stonor by the purchase of the adjoining lands. He was in possession in 1315 when he obtained a grant of free warren in his manors of Stonor, Pishill, Bix Brond, Bixgibwyn, Watlington and elsewhere.⁵

¹ *Excerpt. e rot. finium*, 1, 99.

² *Testa*, p. 119.

³ *Rot. Hund.*, p. 770.

⁴ Ed. Dr. H. E. Salter (O.H.S. vol. 88), p. 297.

⁵ *Calendarium Rotulorum Chartarum* 9 Ed. II, 56.

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Next year he, or the Abbot of Dorchester, obtained licence from the Crown to exchange 100 acres of land and 20 acres of wood in Bixebond for a like quantity in Pyrton.¹

The abbot must have sold or leased this land to John Tidmarsh, who was holding half a knight's fee in Bix in 1346; but by 1428 it had returned to the Stonors; for at an Inquisition taken at Dorchester before Richard Pypard, 25 May, 1428, it was recorded that Thomas Stonor held certain lands and tenements in Bixbrond, lately belonging to John Thedemarsh, for the service of half a knight's fee.²

In spite of their connexion with the de la Poles³ and Nevilles and their loyalty to the old religion and the Stewarts, the Stonors managed to retain their estates at Bix throughout the troubled times of the Wars of the Roses, the Reformation and the Civil War. But during the Commonwealth their financial position became such that on 18 October, 1652, Francis Stonor and his brother Thomas, sons of the then owner, Sir William Stonor, devised the manors of Bix Gibwyn and Bix Brand with others to trustees for eight years to pay the claims of forty creditors.⁴ The term of eight years from 1652 might have been fixed with a prophetic eye on the Restoration. With the king's return came the return of the Stonor estates and prosperity, so that Thomas Stonor was enabled to found the Grammar School at Watlington and build the Market House there in 1664.

In 1834 the manors of Bix Gibbon and Bixbrand are included in the list of the estates of Thomas Stonor.⁵ His great-grandson, Ralph Francis Julian Stonor, Lord Camoys, 20th in direct male descent from the Chief Justice, lives to-day at Stonor; and he still owns land at Bix.

Hugh Bolebec's manor on the hill descended to his granddaughter (according to Dugdale, *Baronage*, I, 452, but more probably his great-granddaughter) Isabella, who married Robert de Vere, 3rd Earl of Oxford. She held it under William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, heir of Walter Giffard and it was held under her by the family of Gibbewin from whom it took the additional name that has ever since distinguished it. The Gibbewins were tenants also of another Bolebec manor at Great Linford, Bucks., and of Marsh Gibbon which still preserves another form of their name. Walter Bolebec, Isabella's father, returned Ralph Gibbewin as holding a knight's fee of him at Great Linford in the record of

¹ *Calendarum Rotulorum Patentium* 10 Ed. II, 5: Addington, *Dorchester*, p. 141.

² *Feudal Aids*, IV, 176.

³ Through the marriage of Thomas Stonor with Joan, natural daughter of John de la Pole son of Alice Chaucer, the Stonors descend from Geoffrey Chaucer.

⁴ Climençon, *History of Shiplake*, p. 258.

⁵ Burke, *History of the Commoners*, II, 444.

an assessment made in 1165 for the Aid to marry the King's daughter¹ and in the Return of knight's fees in 1166 he was still in possession.² The Gibbewins were the successors, and may even have been the descendants, of that Istemet of whom Domesday Book records, with strange and startling pathos, that he had been lord of Marsh in the days of King Edward but now in his old age rented it from his Norman supplanter 'graviter et miserabiliter.'

In the 15th year of King John a suit was brought in the King's Court to determine the ownership of the manor and advowson of Marsh,³ when Geoffrey Gibbewin testified that his father Ralph had owned both. Geoffrey was lord and rector of Great Linford and one of the King's Justices Itinerant.⁴ He was a benefactor to Snelleshall Priory,⁵ and a witness to the charter by which Richard and John de Horsenden gave lands there to the Abbey of Thame.⁶ He himself on the Sunday of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the 9th year of King Henry III (1225) appeared before the King's justices at Brill and made oath that he had given to the monks of Thame all his corn growing at Bix, which therefore was not liable to the tax about to be levied on moveables. And the justices made order accordingly that the tax should not be taken.⁷

He died at Osney Abbey, 17 July, 1235, having become insane some time before, and his heirs brought a suit against the canons to recover the manor of Marsh which he had devised to the abbey. These heirs were Robert Lisle and Robert Brien,⁸ probably the husbands of Geoffrey's daughters. An entry in the *Testa de Neville* (p. 249) shows that they succeeded in recovering Marsh Gibbon, and, as a Robert Brien presented to the church of Bix Gibwyn in 1264, and in 1279 brought a suit for the right of presentation against the Earl of Oxford, the Abbot of Dorchester and Giles de Lisle, they must have inherited also the manor of Bix Gibwen.

The *Testa de Neville*, however, at a date between Isabella's husband's death in 1221 and her own in 1245, records that William de Ralegh and Alexander de Swereford hold a knight's fee in Bix of the Countess of Oxford, and she of the Earl Marshall, 'in warda.'⁹ These two were high officials of the Exchequer: Swereford is credited with the compilation of the Red Book,¹⁰ and Ralegh¹¹ was

¹ Lipscomb, *Bucks.*, IV, 221, quoting *Liber Niger*, p. 194.

² *Red Book*, 317.

³ *Abbrev. Plac. and Excerpta e rot. fin.*, p. 306.

⁴ Madox, *History of the Exchequer*, p. 575.

⁵ *Monasticon*, IV, 233.

⁶ Lee, *History of Thame*, p. 367.

⁷ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, 63.

⁸ *Excerpta e rot. fin.*, p. 306.

⁹ *Testa*, p. 100, 106.

¹⁰ *D.N.B.*: J. H. Round, *Studies in the Red Book*, p. 67.

¹¹ A Ralph de Ralegh was a contemporary rector of Marsh Gibbon: Lipscomb, III, 54.

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afterwards Bishop of Norwich. They evidently held Bix only in trust for the Crown, perhaps during the insanity of Geoffrey Gibwin, who had once been their colleague on the judicial bench.

The Briens and Lisles were in possession of the manor until the end of the century, for Peter Brien presented to the living in 1298. In 1313 Giles Lisle sold his share of Bix to Richard Damory and Margaret his wife,¹ and the Briens had apparently sold their lands to Judge Stonor, for Damory obtained in 10 Edward II a grant of free warren in his manors of Bucknell, Bixgibwin, Mershe and elsewhere as Stonor had already done. In the same year, in a list of the lands held of the Honour of Wallingford, the owners of Buxgibewyn are given as Richard Damory and Margaret, the wife of Nicholas of Abingdon.² Richard's wife was a Margaret of unknown antecedents.³ She survived him, and in 1346 was returned as holding with John Stonor half a knight's fee in Bixegibben.⁴ As the manor had hitherto been a whole knight's fee some of its land must apparently have been alienated, perhaps to the Abbey of Dorchester, the Abbot of which had licence in 9 Edward II to purchase from Nicholas of Marlborough a lay fee in Dorchester, Pyrton, Bixgibwyne and Clifton.⁵

Of Nicholas of Marlborough, as of Nicholas of Abingdon, and their interest in Bix Gibwin nothing has been discovered. Neither can it be at present explained how 'the manor of Bixe in Oxon' came for a time into the rapacious hands of Alice Perrers, mistress of the senile Edward III.⁶ On the death of the king an outraged Parliament had confiscated it with the rest of her ill-gotten spoil; but his successor, Richard II, re-granted it to her husband, Sir William de Windsor. While, however, most of the manors were to him and his heirs, Bix was granted only during the continuance of certain lives, 15 March, 3 Richard II, 1379.⁷

Mistress Perrers' land was probably the Damory portion of Bix, for an Inquisition taken at Dorchester 25 May, 1428, shows that Thomas Stonor was still holding the lands and tenements in Bix Gybewyn which his ancestor had acquired from Giles Lylle and Simon Bryan as ultimate heirs of Geoffrey Gibwin,⁸ and which his descendants continued to hold through the succeeding centuries until it was purchased by the Stapletons of Greys Court in the reign of Queen Victoria.⁹

¹ *Feet of Fines*, 7 Ed. II, 19.

² *Feudal Aids*, IV, 170.

³ *Complete Peerage*, IV, 47.

⁴ *Feudal Aids*, IV, 176.

⁵ Addington, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁶ Macnamara, *Memorials of the Danvers Family*, p. 330, quoting B.M. Add. Charters, 38810.

⁷ *D.N.B.*

⁸ *Feudal Aids*, IV, 170.

⁹ I have to thank Dr. H. E. Salter for his kind interest and help in the preparation of this paper.