

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

Vicars' Close at Wells,

SOMERSETSHIRE.

THE *Chantry Priests* attached to the *Choir* of the Cathedral Church of St. Andrew at Wells, were first ordained by Bishop *Joceline de Welles*, or *Trotman*,* A.D. 1237,† who created many new prebends or canonries, and appointed a *chanter* to each benefice, three excepted.‡ These chantry priests he styled *Vicars-Choral*, and intended they should supply the places of the canons in chanting and performing divine service; but they do not seem to have had any regular establishment until *Walter de Hulle*, subdean of this cathedral in 1334, and archdeacon of Bath in 1342,§ gave two messuages and lands in Wells, that the thirteen chantry priests who officiated in the choir might live in common together. For their better government,

* Vicarios chorales primus ordinavit, qui Canonicorum vices in canendo et sacris operando peragerent.— GODWYN, *De Prasulibus Anglia Commentarius*, in Vita Jocelini de Wells, p. 371. Richardson's edition, Canterbury, 1743.

† Joceline de Wells, called, in the *Annales Marganenses*, Joceline Trotman, elected by the joint suffrages of the canons of Bath and Wells, was consecrated at Reading in the Chapel of St. Mary, May 28th, 1206.— DUGDALE'S *Monasticon*, vol. ii. p. 277. During his episcopacy, the monks of Glastonbury obtained a dissolution of their enforced union with this see; agreeing to surrender some valuable manors and the advowsons of several churches; and Joceline afterwards resumed the title of Bath and Wells, which has continued to be used by the bishops to this day. He was forced into exile by King John, for having interdicted the nation, pursuant to the Pope's command, in 1208; but on his return, five years afterwards, he applied himself particularly to the improvement of the Church of Wells. He obtained from Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, the valuable manors of Congressbury, Chedder, and Axbridge, and annexed them to his see. He rebuilt and dedicated anew the cathedral on the 23d of October, 1239; added a chapel to the Bishop's Palace at Wells, and built many other edifices. He died on the 19th of November, 1242, and was buried in the middle of the choir in Wells Cathedral, under a marble tomb inlaid with his figure in brass; but the latter had been torn away in Godwyn's time, and the tomb was "shamefully defaced."— *History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Wells*, by J. BRITTON, F.S.A., pp. 33, 34, and 106.

‡ Vicarios in Ecclesia singulis Præbendariis ordinavit; tribus exceptis, quibus non provisit morte præventus.— WHARTON'S *Anglia Sacra*, pars i. p. 564. See also COLLINSON'S *History of Somersetshire*, vol. iii. p. 381. GODWYN, *De Prasulibus*, p. 370. Harl. MSS. 6968, PL. XLV.G.

§ LE NEVE'S *Fasti*, pp. 42 and 45. DUGDALE'S *Monasticon*, vol. vi. Pt. III. p. 1466. London, 1830.

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