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History of the Grammar School at Lathbury

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In 1545 Anthony Cave, a wealthy merchant of the Staple from Calais, had acquired certain lands in Lathbury that were formerly in possession of Lavendon Abbey, as well as the rectory and the two Tickford priory manors in Chicheley. His conscience may have been troubling him, or more likely his business experience had impressed upon him upon the need for more general education, for a few years later he decided to build a grammar school in Lathbury. In 1553 he arranged for this to come under the supervision of Christ Church, Oxford and set up a family trust under a 99-year lease for the inappropriate rectory of Chicheley to provide a stipend of £12 a year for the school master. The children of poor parents were to be taught free by the undermaster, but he could receive 3d per quarter for each child whose parents had reasonable means and double this amount if they were worth £20 or more per annum. A unique but decayed list of scholars c1595 was in the possession of a local Lathbury squire early in the nineteenth century who made a copy which is available today. * He was able to transcribe 50 out of a total of 80 names on the list and these represent families of all degrees within a radius of 6 or 7 miles of the school. The farming communities, including the modest smallholder, was well to the fore.

There is no doubt that this had a pronounced cultural effect on the district. The writer has had occasion to examine many score of late sixteenth and early seventeenth deeds for the area and can vouch for the excellent penmanship, as portrayed by signatures and drafts of deeds, of the people concerned. The writing of people in Elizabethan times was usually vile. Anthony's trust deed expressed the hope that his successors at Chicheley would continue to support the school after his lease expired in 1652. In the event this was not possible; Chicheley Hall had been sacked and plundered by the Parliamentary forces and Sir Anthony Chester was a refugee in Holland. The school in due course was closed, and with the permission of Christ Church the materials were used for the repair of the parsonage house (Lathbury) in 1698. The effect on a local farming community was all too plain: in so many cases the neatly written signature had given place to a large and sprawling script – a sure sign of illiteracy (pp193-194)

**Fourteen boys from Sherington attended Cave's Grammar School in Lathbury and were on this list. They included Thomas Hollyman, and Edward and Francis Ardes (nephews of the Richard previously mentioned). The Squire was James Temple Mansel, son of Mansel Dawkins Mansel. Mansel Dawkins Mansel appears in Chibnall's book as the holder of the transcribed list. However, on investigation, the list appears in the collection of his son James Temple Mansel.*

Benefactions to Lathbury

The parsonage of Lathbury was demised in 1553 by Christ Church College to Anthony Cowe of Chicheley Esq: for the term of 99 years for divers considerations one of which was that a grammar school should be erected at Lathbury, to be visited by the College every 3rd year. It was also endowed with two exhibitions yearly of £6 each one of which was to be of Christ Church. The school was built near to the spot where the modern parsonage house stands & the following old lines are probably not an improper description of it

"Some cottage schools are built so low,
The Muses there must groveling goe:
There while Apollo's harp doth sound
The Sisters nine may dance around,
And Architects may take from thence,
The pattern of Magnificence.

Fullers worthies of
Strophis.
Art. Newport.

The following names are copied from a list of the boys of the school, in very bad preservation, those marked * are still to be found in the neighbourhood: several are entirely obliterated, but all that appear to have been written are here reckoned.

"Discipuli scholae Lathburienensis per Baldwinium Sheppard huius magistrum admissi (One of that name was rated 2. 13. 9 (or 9) l. to the Queens household 1599, for his estate at Letcote - Cole 39.)

<u>Prima Classis</u>	Thomas Peace	Edward Ardys
Thomas Kayles	* William Hall	Arthur Barnes
Thomas Withers	* William Johnson	Richard Whetstone
Thomas Albon	* William Chibnall	Edward Whetstone
* William Greene	* William Johnson	John Mathew
John Pars (pass?)	Barton	* Thomas Newman
* John Johnson	* William Grueman	Thomas Names
<u>Total 10</u>	<u>Total 21</u>	* John Hyghtley
<u>Secunda Classis</u>	<u>Quarta classis</u>	* William Hyghtley
* Francis Stanton	* Parmonger Jones	Thomas Nolliman
Nicholas Troughton	Thomas Routell	Francis Ardys
<u>Total 10</u>	Edward Milling	* Edward Chibnall
<u>Tertia Classis</u>	* William Cripps	* George Robinson
Thomas Allen	* Thomas Curtis	William Gater
Richard Hyde	* John Allen	William Wooll
* John Grueman	William Knowles	* Baldwin Wilford
John Troughton	William Whippam	* William Nicholl

John Orin (Orin?)	George Bradford	Total 9 -
Total 30.	* George Kichole	Total on the list
John Gripe	William Kitchell	80.
* Richard Gibballe	William Barnes	
* Richard Bone	Thomas Barnes.	

In the next lease of the Parsonage, dated June 5th 1652, to Henry Andrews esq. for 21 years, no Provision is made for the continuance of the school; so that it went to decay, & was pulled down in 1698, & the materials used in repairing the curate's dwelling. Sir William Andrews, the younger, ordered £2 rent charge, for employing the poor on the bye-ways to be paid for ever.

Margaret Andrews, daughter of Sir Henry, gave £15 to the poor of Lathbury & a marble pavement to the Church.

Henry Athwatt esq. gave the pews to the Church, in lieu of forms which were used before by the whole congregation.

Church History

The Church was given to Laverdon Priory in the year 1172 by John de Bidun, the founder, & at the dissolution to Christ Church College, Oxford.