

MUCH BUDON MUTTERER

22ND APRIL 1265

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BLOW FOR BOWDEN - AXE MURDERER ACQUITTED

From our own correspondent

John Woodard who took the life of a Bowden man, William King, in the sacred ground of St Mary in Arden on 9th June (Pentecost Monday) last year has won his plea for self defence.

Woodard from Kibworth, now plans to support his Lord, Saer de Harcourt, in the armed struggle by the Steward of England, Simon de Montfort, to prevent Henry Plantagenet returning as monarch.

The inquiry was heard under judge Gilbert of Preston on 11th April at Rockingham Castle and the pardon was given today at Northampton. Woodard now has a letter of patent proclaiming his innocence which he will no doubt flaunt around the ale houses of Kibworth.

Bowden folk may feel aggrieved that the jury was set up by the Montfortian government and was full of its supporters.

Father Oliver of Sutton, the priest at St Wilfrid is pleading with his parishioners to keep calm and not to disrupt the forthcoming annual procession from Kibworth to St Marys to collect the sacred chrim oil. "This solemn procession has taken place every Pentecost Monday for as long as any of us can remember" he says "it is too important and solemn occasion to be disrupted by politics for a second year running. Weapons of any kind will just not be allowed within the churchyard "



The blood stained axe used by Woodard to kill William King

extract from a previous report dated 9th June (Pentecost Monday) 1264.....

"the procession from Kibworth was nearing the church door at St Mary's led by John Woodard. A great commotion broke out and William King from Bowden sprang forward wielding an axe with which he struck Woodard in the head, wounding him. Woodard ran outside pursued by King. In the following fight Woodard killed William King with blows from an axe.

Feelings in this Royal manor were running high as it was only just three weeks since King Henry had been captured by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester aided by his knight, Saer de Kibworth and his men, including possibly Woodard himself.

There can be no excuse for violence in a holy place on a sacred occasion but the Mutterer recognizes loyalty of an extreme and sacrificial kind.

The Mutterer extends sympathy to the victim's family"

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NOTES

It was thanks to research done by Michael Wood for his TV series called Story of England, which is set in Kibworth, that the story of this killing came to light. It is a minor incident in the Baron's Revolt of the 13th century led by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester but significant both for Kibworth and for Bowden and St Mary in Arden.

We are not sure whether the victim of this act, William King, came from Little Bowden or Great Bowden. He was possibly a Little Bowden man as were most of the church's parishioners at that time but because Great Bowden (Much Budon) was still a royal estate it is possible that he was from Great Bowden and incensed about the capture of Henry III at the battle of Lewes only 3 weeks before the fatal acts of Pentecost Monday 1264.

We have always felt that St Mary in Arden was special and the Group has done geo-phys on the site of the old church and is currently making a database of all the gravestones left when a written survey was made in 1960. We are also removing ivy and cleaning some of the Swithland slate tombstones and are planning a trip to the archives at Lincoln Cathedral to see what else we can discover.

The fact that annual processions, presumably from several nearby parishes were made to this church and had done so for years "in the custom of the country" means that St Mary in Arden was almost certainly a minster, a mother church for the area. The parishes walked in procession to collect and carry back home the holy chrism oil used for anointing during special services. The church dates almost certainly to before the Norman Conquest but we do not know for how many years these processions had been taking place.