

East Kirkby's Connection with Ely Cathedral



Bishop Thomas Goodrick, the Bishop of Ely, was born in East Kirkby in about 1490 to William Goodrick and his wife Jane. Thomas was described as 'showing early signs of talent and industry' and at the tender age of 10 years was sent to Benet College (Corpus Christi), Cambridge to study. By 1510 he had obtained his B A Degree and went on to obtain his MA in 1514. He became a fellow of Jesus College and was appointed one of the Proctors in 1515. In 1529 he was presented to the rectory of St. Peter Cheap by Cardinal Wolsey as Commendatory of the Abbey of St. Alban and by this time he is a Doctor of Divinity. He was one of the members of the convocation called upon to ascertain the legality of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon in 1529/30, soon after becoming a chaplain to Henry VIII and canon of St. Stephens, Westminster. He also became a commissioner for reforming the Canon Law under Henry VIII and Edward VI. During this time Henry VIII granted a licence to the Prior and Convent of Ely to choose a Bishop and in March 1534 they elected Thomas Goodrick. Early into his tenure he rebuilt, and beautified, the Palace of Ely and also built the long gallery henceforth called 'Bishop Goodrick's Gallery'. Bishop Goodrick now wholeheartedly supported the Reformation and, in 1535, instructed that at High Mass, and Vespers, a declaration, in English, be made to the effect that any reference to the 'Bishop of Rome', within the English Church cease forever. In 1537 he was one of the authors of the 'Bishop's Book' which sought to set out the principles of the Anglican Church together with the Ten Commandments as they are today. He was also called upon to revise the Gospel According to St John in the New Testament. In 1541 Thomas published a violent mandate in which he called for the destruction of all images, relics, ornaments, and shrines so that they 'be removed forever'. In 1549, upon the accession of Edward VI, Thomas was sworn on to the Privy Council and in this year was also one of the compilers of the First Prayer Book of 1549. In 1551 Thomas received the Great Seal and became Lord Chancellor. In 1553 Thomas was persuaded to affix the Great Seal to the proclamation declaring Lady Jane Grey as Sovereign and was subsequently imprisoned for being one of those named in the plot when Queen Mary took the throne. Queen Mary removed the Bishop's name from the list of those to be tried and he was released and safely reached his home at Ely. Mary's reason for exempting from trial was in consideration of his age and on account of his having joined in the order sent by the Council commanding the Duke of Northumberland to disarm. The Great Seal, of course, was taken from him. He paid homage to the Queen on the day of her coronation in 1553 and was permitted to retain his bishopric until his death. Thomas died in May 1554 and was buried in the Chancel of Ely Cathedral. As can be seen a humble son of East Kirkby was very influential during one of the most turbulent times in English History.