

Bretton – Church and Village

By Eric Williams – 1959.

This brief appreciation makes no claim to be a concise history of the beloved Church whose centenary we are now celebrating, nor does it purport to tell the whole story of the little village of Bretton - a village that has its origins deep in the historical soil of our country. It will have fulfilled its purpose if, in some small way, it can both reflect the deep affection of the author for Bretton Chapel and for the village of which it is such an integral part and, at the same time, stimulate in the reader happy memories of earlier days and a desire to renew acquaintance with the Church during this week of celebration and thanksgiving.

May I, at the outset, apologise for any inaccuracies or omissions that may occur and, at the same time, acknowledge my indebtedness to the many friends who have given me information and the encouragement necessary to carry out my task.

It is I think natural, that in attempting to write some account of the history of Bretton Chapel, one should think also of the history attached to the village itself - a history rich in content and of consuming interest to those who would claim Bretton as their home, either now, or in the past.

In Saxon days some 700 acres of land in and surrounding the township of Broughton and Bretton were held by Levenot, Ravesnardus and Ulfac, freemen of Earl Eadwin the ruler, of the kingdom of Mercia who owned and lived in the castle or fortress in the neighbouring township of Hawarden. From the Domesday Record made by order of William the Conqueror in 1087 we learn much about the township and its condition in the reign of Edward the Confessor and we know that William displaced the Saxon rulers and granted a large tract of country including the greater part of Cheshire and North Wales to Hugh Lupus, the ancestor of the Grosvenor family. He, in turn, parcelled out some of this great possession to his own followers and while Robert of Rhuddlan received some of the rich pastures of Broughton, Hugh FitzOsborn and Ralph the Hunter received the lands of which Bretton formed a part. From British Museum records it appears that there were two important houses in the township - Bretton Hall, where a branch of the Holland family resided, and Hopes Place or Plas, the home of the Hope family. About the middle of the 15th century the Bretton Hall estate passed to the Ravenscrofts, a very old Cheshire family, and for over 300 years this family resided there and during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries took an active part in the social and religious life of the County. Up to the middle of the 18th century the