

A Case from the Diocese of Ely

This is one of the 392 cases found in *The Register of the Official of the Bishop of Ely: 21 March 1374 – 28 February 1382*, ed. M. Stentz and C. Donahue (Cambridge, MA: The Ames Foundation, forthcoming) (final proofs online). It is unusual in that it does record an act of the official of Ely. It probably found its way into the register because the official's notary happened to record it rather than the bishop's notary.

330.GREATFORD

Purgacio] Alicia uxor Thome Gritford' de Dodyngton' coram venerabili patre domino Thoma Dei gracia episcopo Elien' citata super crimine adulterii cum presbyteris ut asseritur commisso comparet personaliter in capella manerii sui de Dodyngton' decimo die iunii anno Domini millesimo trecentesimo octogesimo. Negat dictum articulum et purgavit se cum duodecim mulieribus quas tunc produxit coram eo. [fol. 140r]

Gritford' – sententia] Johannes Henry de Dodyngton' citatus [est] coram venerabili patre predicto ad diem et locum supradictos ad instanciam Alicie uxoris Thome Gritford' de eadem in causa diffamacionis eo quod imposuit sibi dictum crimen. Partibus personaliter comparentibus, libellatur per par-tem dicte Alicie oretenus iuxta formam constitutionis Oxon' contra diffamatores edite, lite negative contestata, iuratis partibus hinc et inde de calumpnia, productis per partem actricem duobus testibus, quibus admissis, examinatis, eorum attestacionibus publicatis, factaque conclusionem, quia invenit ipsum aliqua verba dixisse que in infamiam dicte Alicie sonabant, dominus decrevit eum fore puniendum et imposuit sibi penitentiam sequentem, videlicet quod die dominica proximo tunc futura in ecclesia de Dodyngton' publice petet ab ea veniam, dicendo coram toto populo quod talia verba non dixit quia fuerunt vera sed calore iracundie et provocatus. [fol. 140r]

[Editors' Summary] [25 May 80 (89.39)] Greatford. Alice wife of Thomas Greatford of Doddington was cited before the bishop concerning the crime of adultery with priests. She appears personally on 10 June 1380 in Doddington chapel. She denies the article and purges herself with 12 women compurgators.

[25 May 80 (89.40)] Greatford. John Hervey of Doddington was cited before the bishop for said day and place in Doddington chapel at the instance of Alice wife of Thomas Greatford of Doddington in a defamation case. He had accused her of adultery with priests. Parties appear personally. Alice gives an oral libel, according to the constitution of the Council of Oxford against defamers.¹ John contests the suit negatively; parties swear de calumpnia. Alice produces two witnesses, who are admitted and sworn. They are examined and the testimony is published. The case is concluded when it is discovered that John said words that sounded infamous to Alice. The bishop imposes a penalty: next Sunday in Doddington church John should seek from Alice forgiveness, saying before the congregation that he did not say the words because they were true, but because he had been provoked while angry.

¹ [*Auctoritate dei patris*] (defamation), council of Oxford (1222), c. 5, in *Councils and Synods II* 1:107, in Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, 345–8. See Helmholz, *Defamation*, p. xiv.