

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS,
HIGH WYCOMBE.

[By THE VEN. THE ARCHDEACON OF BUCKINGHAM.]

To the issue of RECORDS for 1904 (IX. 7) Mr. W. H. St. John Hope contributed a most interesting article on the Parish Church of High Wycombe. Since the article was written further evidence has come to light, which may tend to modify some of the conclusions at which he arrived. The first is the will of John Stokton, citizen and mercer of London. One clause in the will may be translated as follows:—"I will that each of the two chancels of the parish church of Great Wycombe, to wit, the chancel of S. Mary and the chancel called le bour chancel, shall be made longer towards the east than they now are, by a convenient space, and that 'lez rofez' of the chancels aforesaid shall be supported with sufficient stone columns such as may sufficiently support 'lez rofes' as well of the high chancel as of the two said chancels, to the intent that the parishioners standing and sitting in the two chancels aforesaid may better see the elevation of the body of Christ at the high altar of the same church." Apparently this was not carried out at that time, for in the Early Chancery Proceedings (File 234, No. 8), (A.D. 1493 to 1500) we find a suit instituted by Robert Astbroke and Christopher Watford, in which complaint is made to John, Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, that whereas Sir John Stokton willed and granted that "certyn werkys and bilding shulde be doon and made by his executours, that is to say, the chancell and the two chapellis of both sides to have been takyn downe and set out ferther in length, and the same chauncell to be arched uppon both sides soo that the piissoners myght have sight unto the seid chauncell by both sides of the same, which Stockton made his executours Elizabeth his wife wt dyvers other now

dede and so decessed. After whoes decesse the burgeys of the said towne many and sundery tymes made sute and labour to the said Elizabeth his wife and other hir co-executours, to accomplysse & make the said byldyng according to the said will, and which executours deffered it and deleyed it to doo. And the same bildyng not doon ne eny part thereof, all the said executours died sayng the said Elizabeth, which survived and had then the hole administration of the seid testament. And so it is shee havng a remorse in hir consciens how she stode charged w^t the pformancc of the pmisses agreed w^t one Maister Robert Shyrborne that he shuld take uppon him to be accomplished and he that to doo hath att all tymes deferred and utterly refused and yet doth refuse contrary to all reason and good consciens. In consideration wherof and also that the said chauncell is now in such decay and likely in brief tyme to fall, which if it be suffered shuld be to the destruccion of the said ij chapellys uppon both side of the said chauncell; and also in consideration of the povtie of the p^{is}shons of the said towne of Wycombe &c. The above passages seem to point in the direction of Mr. St. John Hope's conjecture that the North chapel was originally a separate structure with a south wall dividing it from the chancel. There could hardly, however, at that time have been two walls, one of the chapel and another of the chancel, for if that were so the decay of the chancel would not present such danger to the chapel. It would appear also that the South chapel was already in existence, and was not a new addition, as suggested by Mr. Hope, for it was to be treated in the same way by making arches which should open to view the high altar. It is proved also by the record of the Chancery proceedings that the South chapel was "le boure chauncell," or, as it is still called, the Bower Chapel, and that the boure altar did not form a part of the North Chapel, or stand under one of the arches between it and the chancel.

The date of the Chancery proceedings shows that the work given in Mr. Hope's excellent plan as done cir. 1490 must be put a few years later.

Sir John Stokton appears to have been a man of enlightened ideas, and a considerable benefactor to the town, as well as to the Church, for he also made bequests for the repair and widening of the roads; for the building of a market house "so that every man coming to Great Wycombe market or fair with his grain to sell may be able to stand dry under the house, while he exposes his grain for sale; and that there shall be sufficient granaries for putting the grain in at the end of every market, which shall remain not sold, to remain there till the next market is held there"; and for five almshouses.