

ICKFORD CHURCH,

Dedicated to St. Nicholas, may be said to be an ideal village church of the smaller type. In its stones may history be read from the 13th century to the present day. Each age has written here its own chapter. The puritan, with his hammer, seems to have used some self-restraint, and if the restorer has done some mischief and a little falsification, he would seem to have himself been restored away. Varnished pitch-pine, lacquered brass in the wrong places, and noisy and aggressive encaustic tile pavements are not found here to-day. A restful homeliness is rather the characteristic of the interior, while the altar seems only to get additional dignity from the simplicity of its ornaments. The small chancel is not encumbered with a surpliced choir of men and boys, almost obscuring the altar, but a mixed village choir sing at their ease in a west gallery without being stared at by the congregation. Gilbert Sheldon,* 1598—1677, Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury, once held the cure of souls in this remote and peaceful village.

In RECORDS VII., 550, will be found a report upon this church by Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, made at the request of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, so that I will not attempt any description of it. But this report having been made some years before the last (1907) restoration, in the course of which some things came to light which were invisible when Mr. Hope visited the church, I am fortunately able, by his courtesy, to print some notes on the church and that restoration by the last Rector, the Rev. A. D. Burnett, which Canon Staley, their custodian, kindly showed me.

W. N.

* Canon Staley, the present rector, is now engaged upon a life of that distinguished Churchman, which will be published by Wells Gardner, Darton, and Co., early in 1913.



ICKFORD CHURCH

Notes by the Rev. A. D. Burnett: "The church, which consists of chancel, nave with aisles, south porch, and western tower, dates from the first quarter of the 13th century. The first Rector was appointed in 1226. Of this church there remain the principal portion of the tower, the tower arch, much of the chancel walls, the chancel arch, and the enclosing arch and wall of the south doorway. In the building of the south aisle the south doorway and wall of the old porch was incorporated in the new wall, the floor level was raised some six inches, occasioning the step up from the tower and a step down to the chancel, but apart from this the gradual rise from west to east, about ten inches altogether was still maintained. At the restoration these levels were carefully looked into and continued. In the 14th century the east wall of the chancel, with its well-proportioned window, which contains fragments of 14th century glass, was re-built, together with a third part of the north wall, *i.e.* to the centre of the first E.E. window on that side. The east gable of chancel shows a different pitch from the western. About the same time the upper portion of the tower was re-built, the two-light windows being taken out on every side but the west, and the present saddle-back roof imposed. The small lancet in the north aisle contains all that is left of the ancient silvered quarries carefully re-leaded and placed here in 1907. The cusped ornamentation of a later time, though an obvious mis-fit, has a pleasing effect. Eastward from this is the square-headed 14th century window (described by Mr. Hope). On its left-hand splay may still be seen one of the iron sockets made to hold, apparently, a lantern. On the floor near by, used as a paving stone and much worn, was found the *mensa* which doubtless belonged to the altar here" (north chapel), "but is now used as the table of the Jacobean frame of the chancel altar.

"The mutilation of the chancel arch is remarkable, the whole of the eastern order of the arch

having been cut away*; shafts, capitals, and archivolt disclose further mutilations. The bases were restored in 1907, On the south side there is an interesting aumbry, showing the hook and the position of the fastenings of the door. On either side of the chancel there was a 'low side window,' the southern with a double sill. The lower portions of these windows were shuttered, but when it became imperative to re-build the chancel walls from the foundation the jamb on the south side showing this opening was too defective to replace. On the north side a window of the same character had been rather recently walled up, and could only have been reproduced from fragments found in the aperture on removal of this wall, and on its re-building it was decided, perhaps mistakenly, to indicate the later low window and insert above it for light the earlier window moved from its true position behind the Tipping monument. Immediately eastward of this window, in the position it shows now, was found a squint narrowing to an opening $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide on the outside. The Tipping monument had been moved in the seventies to a position blocking the north door—the 'corpse' door of the villagers—to make room for some ungainly and unsuitable choir stalls—and remained there for about thirty years. (Mr. Burnett thinks it evident that the Perpendicular window in the south wall of chancel was brought hither from some other building and placed where it is to throw light upon the Tipping monument.) The east window of the south aisle is broken in the arch by settlement the broken surface bearing evidence of early painted decoration. The niche seems to have been inserted after the south wall had gone outward, but this corner had to be re-built in 1907, being almost a ruin. Another feature of the south aisle is the restored stoup by the door at a very low level, having been in south wall of porch which was later included in that of the south aisle, the level

* Mr. Hope, in his report referred to above, says: "It is highly improbable that any part of this arch has been removed." Mr. Burnett supposed that this cutting away was for fixing the roof-loft, but this was always on the western side of the arch.—W. N.

of floor being raised. There is a 17th century communion cup and cover with inscription [the gift of Gilbert Sheldon, Bishop of London]. In oak the church is rich: a series of Elizabethan benches in original condition except for a slight widening of the seats and the addition of book-boards; the table, frame and Jacobean pulpit, the centre post of the latter being original. There is a fine piece of Caroline panelling which has again found its original position, as we believe, in the front of the singers' gallery, removed at the beginning of last century, but now replaced at the west end."

A. D. B.

Referring to the report in the "Bucks Herald," reprinted in the Parish Magazine, of the visit paid to the church this summer by our Society, Mr. Burnett makes the following further notes:—"There appears to be no sufficient evidence in the building of any earlier church than the present. It is true that the original nave was replaced within the same architectural period by the existing nave and aisles. Mr. J. O. Scott, the architect employed at the restoration, 1906-7, always pointed to the present nave arcading as indicative of a period practically contemporaneous with the tower and chancel arches. The late Mr. James Parker spoke to me more than once in the same sense, the nearest approach to Norman work he discerned in the south doorway."

"There is no doubt, I think, that the chancel was part of the original building, the present nave being actually somewhat later than the chancel. The east wall of the chancel is not modern, as stated, but of the 14th century. Mr. St. John Hope's opinion, as expressed in his report" (referred to above) "must be corrected by what came to light at the restoration. I am aware that he put on one side the notion that the eastern members and south respond of the chancel arch had been cut away, but his proofs to the contrary were shown to be erroneous; the original line of the order was distinctly visible to me on the present surface, which also showed different colour and tooling, and much else pointed to the same conclusion. I am

aware of the usual position of the rood loft, but there are (or were) many undoubted traces of where this was fixed, and how the structure was mutilated for the purpose.

“It is not a ‘supposition,’ but a proved fact, that a low side window existed on the north side of the chancel as well as on the south.

“The Tipping Monument—There is no black marble, but some of the stonework has been painted dark.”

The excellent view of the interior is from a photograph, kindly lent me by Mr. Burnett. A very good view of the exterior from the north-west, showing the remarkably fine west belfry E.E. window, will be found in the recently issued Inventory of Historical Monuments by the R. Commission.