

NOTES

MURAL PAINTINGS IN CHALFONT ST. GILES CHURCH

Since the publication of my account of the Chalfont St. Giles mural paintings in the RECORDS (Vol. XII., No. 3, pp. 108-118), there has been some discussion concerning the group of subjects at the east end of the south aisle, and Dr. M. R. James has recently put forward a fresh view which fits the facts better than any previous ideas. The interpretation of this particular group of paintings has for many years been a matter of controversy. The Rev. P. W. Phipps thought one was the Virgin releasing a soul from Purgatory, and that another referred to the transference of the patronage of the Church to the Bishop of Lincoln.¹ The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments identified hands holding a wafer²—not mentioned elsewhere. And finally there was Professor Tristram's interpretation of Scenes in the Life of St. Catherine, and upon his judgment I very largely based my own account, as there stated (p. 110). I nevertheless commented upon the fact that had the central figure not been identified as St. Catherine one would have inclined to the view that it was the Virgin that was represented, and that the altar was dedicated to her (p. 112). As events have proved, the Virgin now appears, with little doubt, to be the central figure, the group representing some of her miracles.

The interpretation and able identification of the scenes by the Provost of Eton, Dr. M. R. James, to whom I am indebted for his views on the question, is now accepted by Professor Tristram. I am therefore glad of the opportunity of correcting my error. All comment on those particular subjects, based on the

¹ Records of Bucks VI., 86-7.

² R.C.H.M. Bucks I., 81.

assumption that St. Catherine in her capacity as Patroness of Learning was the central figure, is now of course inapplicable: but the rest remains unaffected. The paintings at the east end of the south aisle should now read as follows:—

E. wall, N. side. St. Anne teaching the Virgin. (As before).
 E. wall, S. side. Fragmentary and unidentified; but from the context of the surrounding subjects probably scenes in the life of the Virgin or some of her miracles. (The identification of the visible details remains the same).

S. wall, E. to W.

- (1). The Virgin protecting and receiving a Jewish boy of Bourges from an oven into which his father had put him for having received Communion with his Christian playmates. Compare this subject as represented in the Eton College wall paintings about a century later.
- (2). The Virgin restoring to the repentant Theophilus the deed by which he had sold his soul to the Devil. He had done so in order that he might be re-instated in his office in a Church in Cilicia. He afterwards regretted his evil bargain and prayed to the Virgin for forgiveness, as he is shown doing, kneeling before the altar on which is an image of the Virgin and Child, until she miraculously appears and restores the bond. This was also depicted at Eton, but was destroyed. An illuminated manuscript almost contemporary with the Chalfont St. Giles paintings (Brit. Mus. Royal MS., 10 E 4, f. 162-199) shows remarkably similar treatment of this particular subject, which was a popular one with mediaeval artists.

Also since the publication of my previous paper, the hoped-for step of moving the Parker monument has been taken. The monument has been moved to the north aisle, and on the wall where it had been were found traces, as had been anticipated (p. 113), of an extremely interesting Creation scene. The subject is a good deal damaged, and the preceding panel has entirely perished except for traces of colour, so that one cannot tell the exact scheme in which the Creation was set out. But from the fact that birds, animals and foliage appear in one scene,

and that the space for other panels is limited, one may assume a contracted or composite treatment to have been adopted. The subject of Adam naming the animals is, as Dr. James has pointed out, a common one in the mediaeval English Bestiaries, as was also the Creation of Adam and of birds and animals, treated in one panel. The former is possible in the present instance, as there is some space at the left hand side of the subject where the painting has perished. But the latter subject would indicate a more diffuse treatment of the story than the available space and other evidence warrants.

The panel is continuous with those showing the Fall and Expulsion from Eden. At the top right hand side is a large black bird, and below it and to the left is another smaller bird. Across the centre and lower portion leap various animals from right to left. At the top is a fine stag; below that a lion or leopard, with graceful and vigorous lines; more to the right are a fawn, and perhaps a dog, both springing from the earth just by Eve's feet. Two long ears elsewhere in the picture probably belonged to a hare, and at the base and left hand corner are what appear to be traces of conventional scroll foliage, as in the Jesse Tree further west. The subject is partly obliterated by an Elizabethan text—the Lord's Prayer. The recovery of this less common subject has added greatly to the interest and value of this whole series of early 14th century paintings.

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AN ANGLO-SAXON BEAD : FOUND AT
CHALFONT ST. PETER

Early in January, 1931, a workman digging a drain trench near the Cottage Hospital, Chalfont St. Peter, unearthed a bead at a depth of two or three

feet, the specimen having all the appearance of being of Anglo-Saxon date. The object did not come to my notice until some time after its discovery, and by the time I could inspect the site, the excavation—a very small one—had been filled in, and the exact circumstances of the find were a little vague.

The bead itself is half an inch long by 9/16 of an inch at the widest diameter of the curved surface. It is of glass, and has a grey-buff opaque ground, decorated with criss-cross lines of light blue, glazed. It was submitted to Mr. T. D. Kendrick of the British Museum, who kindly confirmed the identification, and gave references to similar examples illustrated in *Archæologia*, 60, PI. XXXII., from the Ipswich Anglo-Saxon cemetery, mainly excavated in 1906.

The bead itself as an isolated specimen is less interesting than what its presence may indicate. One usually associates the discovery of such objects with the existence of a burial, or even a cemetery. No other relics or evidence were found at the time: but since the excavation was a very small and narrow one these might have been missed, and a careful watch will be kept on the site in the event of further digging. Remains of this date are not common in South Bucks, and that must be the excuse for mentioning this seemingly trivial object.

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