

CHURCHES WHICH HAVE BEEN LATELY
BUILT OR RESTORED.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, AYLESBURY.—The external restoration of this church has been considerably advanced during the last twelve months. A small flat-headed, decorated window of peculiar character, in one of the vestries on the north side of the building, now used as the organ chamber, has been re-opened. But the most striking feature on the north side of the building is the new Decorated window at the end of the north transept, facing the visitor as he enters the south transept door. The arch and jambs of this window are indeed original; but the heavy Perpendicular tracery, which had been inserted in it without much regard to symmetry or proportion, is now replaced with Decorated tracery in thorough keeping with the ancient framework or setting. The whole of the tower is now faced with rubble stone, with quoins of Bath stone throughout; the effect of the staircase turret at the north-east angle being very good. The tower, which is of the thirteenth century, is surmounted with an ornamental parapet of wrought stone, with panelled battlements of Perpendicular character, making an elegant transition between the severe and simple Early English masonry below them, and the clock tower and spire above, of the seventeenth century. This turret and spire have been re-cased with lead, and the old clock faces have been replaced with ornamental dials of cast iron, painted in chocolate of different tints. The spire, which was deflected considerably to the south-east, has been set upright, and the timbers have been thoroughly repaired. It is worthy of notice that all these works have been executed by Aylesbury tradesmen: the stone-work by Mr. W. W. Thompson; the wood-work by Mr. Mayne; and the lead-work by Mr. Goss. The new clock dials were provided by Mr. Field, according to designs approved by Mr. Scott.

The interior of the Lady Chapel is now completed. The east window is filled with stained glass of good Decorated character—the work of Messrs. Burlison and Grylls. The three lights contain figures of Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, and Mary the wife of Cleopas.

The central figure (that of the Virgin) was given by Mrs. Jordan, the remainder of the window by Archdeacon Bickersteth. The two side windows, executed by Messrs. Powell and Sons, are the offering of Mrs. Bickersteth. The piscina and sedilia are also reproduced, the stonework and carving being by the hand of Mr. Thompson.

The church of ASTON ABBOTS, dedicated to St. James, has been restored at a cost of about £1230, and was re-opened by the Lord Bishop of Oxford on May 22, 1866. G. E. Street, Esq., A.R.A., was the architect. The tower, which is the only part of the old church now standing, is of the fourteenth century; the remaining part of the building was of the eleventh. Aston Abbots was an endowed vicarage before the Reformation, and belonged to the abbots of St. Albans. The rectory and all rights belonging to it were afterwards granted to Lord John Russell, who was also lord of the manor. From the Bedford family it passed to the Earl of Chesterfield; from him to the Duke of Buckingham; and then to the present proprietor, the Right Hon. Lord Overstone. The tower has been thrown open, so as to show the west window. The seats are open, and of yellow deal, varnished. On the east of the low stone screen running across the chancel arch are two seats of oak, one of which is used as the reading-desk. The pulpit is well executed in Ancaster stone. The east window of the chancel, through the exertions of the Vicar among Sir J. C. Ross's relatives and friends, is in memory of Sir J. C. and Lady Ross. The window has been admirably executed by Mr. Miller, of Golden Square, London, at a cost of £70. The chancel is paved with Godwin's encaustic tiles, and a small vestry has been added. The building is of rough stone from the old church, in random courses, with Ancaster stone quoins and windows. The church furniture, consisting of altar cloth, hassocks, alms basins, font cover, clerk's desk, etc., have been presented by Mrs. Thornton and family, from the proceeds of private sales of their own work.

The church of LITTLE MARLOW was re-opened on September 15, 1866, after a restoration most successfully carried out under the directions of Mr. R. P. Pope, architect, of 8, King's Road, Gray's Inn. The restoration was most conservative; no portion of the fabric was altered, and

the mouldings, etc., were replaced after the existing models. A hideous gallery, and the usual inconvenient high square pews, were removed, and open benches substituted. The entire floor was relaid, with more costly tiles in the chancel. Two very elegant Early English windows in the chancel were carefully restored, and the removal of a plaster ceiling brought to light the original timbers of the roof. The displacing the west gallery brought into notice the fine western arch, which had been entirely obscured. The east window was filled with stained glass by Heaton Butler and Bayne, and a small organ was erected. Offerings were made of an altar cloth, altar candlesticks, and flower vases.

The fine old church of ST. MARY, EDLESBOROUGH was re-opened November 20, 1867, after a complete restoration of the interior, with the exception of the chancel, at a cost of some £2000. The architect, R. J. Withers, Esq., Doughty Street, London, has admirably preserved the original character of the building, which, fortunately, had suffered little from the ruthless hands of the eighteenth century beautifiers, though time had done its work.

The gallery has been removed, throwing in the massive tower of the belfry, and the west window, which had been partly bricked up. The original lancet shape is now renewed, and filled with stained glass by Ward and Hughes. The subject represents the Virgin and Child at Bethlehem; the church being dedicated to St. Mary. Sufficient of the old open seats remained to enable the new sittings to be made after the same design, and by clearing away the pews, nearly a hundred additional sittings have been gained. The windows are glazed with two tints, amber and green, diamond and square alternate. The walls of the church and tower, when stripped of their plaster, showed very massive masonry of Totternhoe stone. This has been pointed with excellent effect. The space above the arches being too full of rubble for pointing, the whole of the spandrels have been filled with frescoes by Messrs. Bell of London.

The Gothic pulpit, a drawing of which is shown in Lipscomb's "History of Bucks," with one of the few canopies remaining in England, now forms a great feature in the church. It is about fourteen feet in height, and all the carved work has been carefully restored by Ratter

and Kelt, of Cambridge. The pulpit now stands north of the rich screen, which has been beautifully decorated by Messrs. Bell with figures of cherubim in the span-drils. The vestry screen is new, and decorated by the same artists, and rich coloured glass closes up the arch.

A little window, found in the wall in the north aisle, has been opened and filled with stained glass. This appeared to have had some connection with a fire-place which was found in the wall, about ten feet from the ground, with the ashes and charred wood still remaining. The chancel belongs to Earl Brownlow. The restoration, which would complete the work, will make this one of the most noble churches in this county.

The church of Oving, which has been restored under the direction of Mr. G. E. Street, was reopened for divine service by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, December 13, 1867. The whole of the interior has been restored, a new vestry built on the north side, and new clerestory windows, three decorated and one quatrefoil, substituted for the old square ones. The church has been re-seated with open benches, and the aisles paved with four-inch quarries. The south and east walls of the chancel are entirely new, the old early English windows being retained. A new open stained roof has been added, and a handsome carved oak screen placed in the south arch. A very handsome reredos, in alabaster, with a super-altar and cross of Devonshire marble, has been placed in the east end, the walls at the side of the reredos being panelled with Ancaster stone bands and encaustic tiles. A new oak table and oak stalls and prayer-desks have been placed in the chancel, the floor of which has been paved with encaustic tiles. A handsome octagon pulpit of Ancaster stone has been placed in the north-east corner of the nave.

In the course of the restoration, several interesting features in the architecture of the church have been brought to light. A handsome arch on the north side, which had been bricked up, has been thrown open, and now forms the entrance to the vestry. Two ancient piscinas on the south side have also been opened.

The cost of the works has amounted to about £800. The restoration of the clerestory has been effected at the cost of the Rev. W. H. Young, the resident curate, and

members of his family ; the handsome altar-cloth is the gift of the Hon. Mrs. Caulfield Pratt, and the books are given by her sons and their tutor.

The church of LATIMER, which was erected, in 1841, by the munificence of the late Lord Chesham, has been enlarged and beautified at the cost of the present Lord Chesham, according to the designs of Mr. Gilbert Scott, and was reconsecrated December 21, 1867, by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. The improvements which have been recently effected consist in the addition of a north and south transept to the nave, an apse at the east end, and an addition to the length of the nave at the west end of about thirteen feet. A new vestry and organ-chamber have been added on the north side of the chancel and apse. The arches in the chancel and apse are Gothic, of an early date, of Bath stone, and the carving of the capitals (chiefly naturalistic) is remarkably beautiful, as is also that of the corbels supporting the roof. The chancel and the sanctuary formed by the apse are paved with encaustic tiles, and a credence-table and a stone sedile are placed on the north and south sides of the new altar-table. The stained-glass window, which formerly occupied the east end, has been removed to the south transept, and there are three new lancet windows, by Clayton and Bell, in the apse, to the memory of Charles, first Baron Chesham ; of Catherine, Lady Chesham ; and of the Hon. Algernon Cavendish, son of the present Lord Chesham, who died about two years ago. The chancel is fitted with new stalls, and the whole church with open seats of pitch-pine polished. The prayer-desk and lectern are the gift of the rector, the Rev. Bryant Burgess. A beautiful carpet for the floor within the communion rails has been worked by Lady Chesham and other ladies. The font has been removed to the west side of the south porch. The land required for the extension of the building, as well as a portion for the enlargement of the churchyard, has been given by Lord Chesham. Since the reconsecration of the church, two additional windows, by Messrs. Clayton and Bell, have been inserted on the south side of the apse and chancel.

The new chapel of ease at WESTCOT, called the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and erected by the liberality of the Duke of Buckingham, after designs by Mr. G. E. Street,

was consecrated on December 23, 1867, by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. The foundation-stone was laid by the Duchess of Buckingham. The leading character of the architecture of the church is Early English; it consists of a nave, two aisles, chancel, and south porch. The east window consists of a triple lancet, with a wheel light above, and the west window a triple lancet with three circular lights. The side windows of the chancel are in the Early Decorated style; the stained glass in the east and west windows has a remarkably chaste and pleasing appearance; the other windows are filled with cathedral glass. A dormer window in the roof on the south side of the nave gives a good light to the whole of the interior, and a very small bell turret in the centre of the roof of the nave carries a single bell. The exterior walls are of the blue local stone (from Blackthorne), with Ancaster stone dressings. A handsome cross surmounts each end of the nave and the east end of the chancel. The arches, corbels, and indeed the whole of the building, are totally devoid of any ornamentation. The shafts of the pillars are circular, the capitals being square, without any moulding. The roof is open, of stained deal. The chancel is paved with encaustic tiles, and a handsome credence is placed on the north side. The pulpit, which is octagonal, in Ancaster stone, is placed at the extreme north-east corner of the nave. The font is also octagonal, each side being semi-circular; the shaft is circular, with dog-tooth ornament; it is placed on the west side of the porch. The prayer-desk and stalls in the chancel are of English oak, and the open seats in the nave and aisles of stained deal. About an acre of land around the church has been appropriated as a burial-ground for the hamlets of Westcott and Woodham. The total cost of this act of liberality on the part of the Duke of Buckingham amounts to about £1500.

The ancient church of GRENDON UNDERWOOD was reopened by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, January 18, 1868. The church consists of a nave, chancel, and western tower. Its date is the latter half of the thirteenth century, except the tower, which was built in the fifteenth century. At this period it would appear that the walls of the nave were raised, the present roof put on, and several windows inserted in the walls. About two centuries ago a waggon-

headed roof was put on the chancel, and a broad flat-headed window inserted in the eastern wall. Subsequently the waggon-headed roof was plastered to the form of half an ellipse, severed through its longest axis. Fortunately the builders of this latter period left sufficient evidence of its former state to enable the architect (Mr. E. G. Bruton) to ascertain the dimensions and period of the destroyed eastern window, and sufficient remains of the glass to serve as a guide to a faithful restoration of the original design. The stones of the walls of the chancel have been repointed with black mortar where possible, and where this could not be done the walls have been newly plastered. A very handsome five-light window, with centre-quatrefoil wheel above, has been placed in the east end. The stained glass, by Clayton and Bell, is in harmony with the other chancel windows and with what can be traced of the old window, and the old glass has been inserted as far as possible to prove the faithfulness of the restoration. The floor is paved with tessellated and encaustic tiles, and the stalls, altar-table, and the whole of the fittings are new. An open-timbered roof has been thrown over the chancel. The chancel arch has also been restored. The roof of the nave has been repaired, and new mullions have been inserted in all the windows. The pulpit (which is Jacobean) has been placed on a new pedestal of Bath stone, and also the old font. An ancient piscina has been removed from the south side to the north-west corner of the nave. A handsome new lectern has also been provided, and the nave is filled with open oak benches.

The church of ST. MARY, BLETCHLEY, was re-opened on May 19, 1868, by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. The work which has just been completed derives a special interest from the fact that the last restoration of Bletchley church was carried out by the devoted antiquarian Browne Willis, who was Lord of the Manor about A.D. 1720, although his chief affection seems to have been bestowed on the chapel at Fenny Stratford, built by himself. The church, which is in some parts of as early a date as the eleventh century, consists of a large chancel, with chancel aisle forming a chantry of the Grey de Wilton family; a clerestoried nave, with flat oak roof, and two aisles of four bays each; a fine western tower,

and an Early English porch, leading to a fine Norman doorway, which is the earliest portion of the building. There is an effigy, well sculptured in white marble, on a mutilated stone altar tomb, probably of the founder of the chantry; and in the north wall was discovered part of an arched monumental recess, now opened. The whole of the exterior has been restored in Ancaster and Bath stone. The whole of the interior has also been thoroughly restored. The most conspicuous alteration is in the chancel. The windows and doorway, which had been modernized and misplaced, have been altered so as to harmonize with the original character of the building. In the east end is a five-light traceried window, with trefoils and quatrefoils in the head. The door leading into the vestry on the north side, close to the east wall, which had been blocked up, has been opened. The eastern portion of the De Wilton aisle must have been used as a vestry, originally connected with the chancel by this doorway. There are four early sedilia on the south side, two of which had been destroyed. There are also several small recesses partly blocked. A small but interesting mural brass is fixed against the north wall. Externally on the east parapet of the De Wilton aisle, is the representation of a chalice incised in the stone. A few remains of ancient stained glass are preserved with the view to replacing them, making up the deficiency with new glass to some of the windows. The south windows of the south aisle have been renewed, and the string replaced beneath them. Over the communion-table is a reredos, which, considered simply as a work of art, may be pronounced one of the finest in this part of the country. It consists of a canopied centre panel, surmounted by a floreated cross, and two narrow side panels of Painswick stone, with carved caps and bases, and Mansfield red shafts. In front is a detached cross of Mansfield stone, richly carved, backed by a painting of radiated nimbus in the centre panel, the side panels being diapered, with an angel in the centre beneath the cusping. The chancel is fitted with return stalls of carved oak; the altar-rails are of oak, fitted with ornamental iron-work. The curious ceiling of the chancel, representing the twelve Apostles, has been preserved, partly in deference to the memory of Browne Willis, and partly

on financial grounds. A very handsome altar-cloth has been worked and presented to the church by Mrs. Williamson, the wife of the Rev. T. P. Williamson, Little Brickhill. An interesting old clerestory has been opened out on the south side. The roof of the north aisle, which is of the fourteenth century, consisting of large arched braces, supported on carved stone corbels, has been repaired. The body of the church has been fitted with oak seats, and a paving of wood blocks under the seats; the other portions of the floor being covered with Minton's tiles and the old paving. The pulpit, the gift of the rector, the Rev. W. Bennitt, which is on the south side, is octagonal—the panels containing beautifully sculptured figures of our Lord and the four Evangelists, and resting on a shaft, with moulded capital and base. The fine old tower had fallen into a state of dilapidation which was almost dangerous. The “four handsome pinnacles at the angles,” commemorated by Lipscomb, have been removed, as out of character with the rest of the building. The belfry windows and parapets have been almost entirely renewed. One of the old bells—a fine peal of eight, which for richness of tone are second to none in the county—has been re-cast.

The whole of the work has been carried out under the superintendence of the architect, Mr. W. White, F.S.A., of Wimpole Street, by the contractor, Mr. Kimberley, of Banbury, and the carving has been executed by Mr. S. Allen, of Luard Street, Caledonian Road.

A very fine organ, designed by the Rev. W. G. Corker, of Fenny Stratford, and built by Mr. T. Ather-ton, Leighton Buzzard, has been placed in the north aisle.

To be continued.
