

The Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archaeological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1903.

ANNUAL EXCURSION.

The locality selected for the annual excursion of the Bucks Archaeological Society this year, which took place on the 16th July, was the district lying to the south-west of Buckingham, on the borders of Oxfordshire. The places at which stoppages were made are small secluded villages, but all of them full of interest to the antiquary and ecclesiologist.

Verney Junction was selected as the place of meeting, and thither the members made their way from their various localities by trains from Oxford, Buckingham, Aylesbury, and Bletchley, arriving at Verney Junction soon after mid-day. Immediately the last of the trains came in the party took their places in brakes. In consequence of the awkward times at which the trains run on the lines converging towards the Junction, the time at the disposal of the party was very limited; but the Committee considered that a visit to Hillesden alone would amply compensate for the lack of a more varied programme.

All being in readiness, a start was made with praiseworthy expedition, and an hour's drive through the pleasingly-diversified scenery of the country around the Claydons brought the visitors to Twyford Church.

Included in the party were—General Sir Henry Smyth, K.C.M.G., and Lady Smyth, Mr. John Parker, Mr. A. H. Cocks, Mr. S. Darby, Mr. W. Bradbrook, Mr. A. Vernon, Miss Dove and Miss Gibson, the Rev. J. W. Cruikshank, Mr. F. Harold Deverell, Mr. Alfred Deverell, Mr. W. A. Forsyth, Mr. T. Thurlow, and Mr. J. T. Harrison.

TWYFORD.

The name of this village indicates its position between two fordable streams. The manor was bestowed upon Ralph de Felgeres or Fulgeres after the Conquest, and in the time of Henry III. it was held by Ralph Fitz-Nicholas, who had a grant of a fair here in 1251. It afterwards passed with Aylesbury and other manors in the neighbourhood to the Butlers, Earls of Ormonde and Wiltshire. In the reigns of Edward IV. and Richard III. this family was attainted for their adherence to the Lancastrian cause, and the Giffards, who had been subfeudatories under the Butlers, became possessed of the fee, and they held the estate till 1550, when it passed to the Wenmans, who made it their principal seat till the beginning of the 18th century. The Manor House, known as Twyford Lodge, is said to have been erected by Lord Wenman on the site of the old mansion.

The Church is one of the two in Bucks—the other being Hartwell—dedicated in honour of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. In "The Ecclesiastical Topography of England" by some unaccountable blunder there is no description given of this church. It is there returned as simply "re-built." It consists of a tower, a south porch, a nave with north and south aisles, and chancel. The building is mainly Early English, with a Perpendicular clerestory; but it has some interesting remains of an earlier edifice. Near the chancel is the base and $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet of the shaft of the churchyard cross.

The most interesting feature of the Church is undoubtedly the inner doorway of the porch. It is an example of early Norman work, and is described with full details by Mr. Charles E. Keyser, F.S.A., in his paper on "The Norman Doorways in the County of Buckingham" (RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Vol. VIII., pp. 224, 225).

The tower, restored in 1887, is low and embattled, and contains five bells.

An arcade of four pointed arches, supported by clustered columns on each side of the nave, communicates with the aisles, which are continued westward beyond the termination of the nave. The large circular font is Norman. The open roof of oak is supported by carved stone corbals, some of which represent angels. Some of the seats are ancient oak benches, with fleur-de-lis ends. The doorway which formerly led to the rood-loft and the screen still remain. The sanctuary possesses an ambrey, piscina, and sedilia.

There are two interesting brasses in the Church, one of an ecclesiastic, the other of a layman. That in the middle of the chancel is in memory of John Everdon, rector of Twyford, who died in 1413, and was buried there. The effigy is only half-length, and represents a priest in the usual Eucharistic vestments. The other brass represents Thomas Giffard, of Twyford, who died in 1550, and is affixed to a thick slab of Purbeck marble on the top of an altar tomb in the south aisle. The effigy shows a man in armour, with a gorget and skirt of chain mail, lying between four brass shields of arms, and a greyhound is at his feet. The sides and ends of the tomb are divided into compartments, ornamented with sculptured arches, angels, and shields. Over the tomb is an ancient helmet. These brasses are figured in Lipscomb, Vol. III., p. 135.

In the same aisle there is another altar tomb under a low arch, and also a mutilated figure of a cross-legged Knight in complete panoply of chain-mail with a close hawberk. Within the arch is a small upright figure holding a heart between the two hands. At the east end of the aisle there is a monument to the memory of the first Viscount Wenman, who died in 1640. Within the sanctuary on the north side is a tablet to the memory of the Rev. William Perkins, curate of this parish for 45 years, who died in 1820, aged 75 years.

The living of Twyford is a Rectory, annexed to the Rectorship of Lincoln College, Oxford, since 1475, and is held by the Rectors without institution or induction. A portion of the rectory house, which stands on the north side of the churchyard, is ancient.

Among the rectors who rose to eminence in the Church may be mentioned—(1) Ralph, the first on the list, who became Dean of Stafford in 1207; (2) Thomas de Twyford, his successor, became Archdeacon of Buckingham; (3) Thomas Brown or Browne, rector in 1449, was afterwards successively Bishop of Rochester and Norwich; (4) John Marshall, the last rector before the living was annexed to the rectorship of Lincoln College, was collated to the Prebend of Aylesbury in July, 1467, and in the next year promoted to the See of Llandaff, in which Cathedral he was buried.

Had circumstances permitted, a longer time than was available could have been profitably spent in examining this interesting little Church, but after the party had inspected the south doorway and passed a short time inside the building, the time arrived for them to proceed to the house in the village where luncheon had been prepared.

It has always been customary to hold the annual meeting and present the financial statement immediately after the luncheon; but on this occasion, as time at disposal was so brief, it was thought better to postpone the business usually gone through. It was decided, therefore, that the annual meeting should be held at the Museum, in Aylesbury, on the 5th August.

After lunch the members drove to Hillesden.

HILLESDEN.

This was by far the most interesting place visited by the members during the day. In its name is doubtless enshrined that of the Anglo-Saxon settler who first made it his abode.* The manor has at various periods belonged to several noble families, such as the Giffards, Earls of Buckingham, the De Veres, Earls of Oxford, and the Courtneys, Earls of Devon. In 1547 King Edward VI. granted it to Thomas Denton, and it belonged to his descendants until the early part of the last century.

One of the most interesting events connected with the village is the siege of Hillesden House during the civil commotions of the 17th century. Sir Alexander Denton, who was a strong Royalist, fortified the house that it might hold a similar position with regard to Newport Pagnell that Brill did with Aylesbury, and be in touch with the King's forces at Oxford. The first attack upon Hillesden House, Feb. 27, 1643, made by a party of 300 horse and foot from Aylesbury, proved unsuccessful. Another attack was made soon after from Newport Pagnell by a considerable number of troops under the command of Colonel Cromwell. The main body marched to Steeple Claydon, where they rested for the night, a fact which is commemorated by the following inscription on an illuminated brass plate inserted in the gable wall of an old building not far from Claydon Church:—"The Camp Barn.—Around this spot the Army of the Parliament, under the command of Cromwell, was encamped, March, 1643, and on the 3rd of that month advanced from hence to the attack of Hillesden House." The place was taken by assault, many of its defenders were killed, and others, including Sir Alexander Denton, taken prisoners.

The Parliamentary soldiers ransacked the house and then set fire to it, which reduced it to ruins. The mansion was re-built on the original site, and became the residence of Mr Justice Denton; but after the Earl of Leicester sold the estate in 1824 the house was pulled down, and the only vestiges now remaining are some foundations and garden terraces, which can still be traced. In a field to the south-west of the Church a portion of the line of defence thrown up in 1643 is discernible.

The party, on arriving at Hillesden, proceeded at once to the Church. The building is described in "Ecclesiastical Topography" as "a very fine specimen of Perpendicular, although rather late in the style," and in Sheahan's "History of Buckinghamshire" as "a beautiful but dilapidated edifice of cut stone." It is still "beautiful," and every lover of ecclesiastical architecture must rejoice to know it is not now "dilapidated."

* Another explanation of the name, if Iyson is correct in spelling it Hillesdon (in Domesday it is called Ulesdoue), is its having a reduplication of names as in the case of Penthow-Hill in Essex; the Celtic, Pen; Anglo-Saxon, hlaw; and the English, hill.

In the report upon the state of Buckinghamshire Churches made in 1637 these remarks occur in reference to that of Hillesden:—"The ceiling of the chancel and the north aisle of it want repairing, being to be adorned as the rest is: no sentences of Scripture: some seats broken: the bottom of the seat on the S. side of the chancel in decay both in boards and pavement: the long seat on the N. side of the Church to be turned over cross, and to be made into short seats agreeable to the rest: the pavement on the S. side of the chancel in decay: Francis Long and Francis Armborough's seats to be set alike unto Andrew Lucas' seat."

But it is not only in comparatively modern times that this Church has been neglected. The advowson and tithes had been given to Notley Abbey by its founder, Walter Giffard, and the monks supplied the Church, but never instituted a vicar. Browne Willis gives the following account of the origin of the present building:—"The Church was all new-built, except the tower, not long before the Reformation. It being ruinous, a complaint was exhibited at the visitation against the Abbot and Convent of Nutley, Anno Domini 1493, 8 Henry VII., that Hillesden Chancel and other parts of the Church were very ruinous, and that the churchyard lay open, and the whole was in great dilapidation, and the Abbot of Nutley ought to amend it: which had so good an effect as occasioned it to be new-built in the handsome manner it now is."

In 1873 Sir G. G. Scott was called upon to make a report upon the condition of the Church with a view to its restoration. He begins by saying: "It is with special interest and pleasure that I undertake to report on this beautiful Church, of which the Restoration is now happily contemplated; for, while it is one of the most exquisite of the smaller productions of those latter days of mediæval architecture to which we owe the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, Saint George's Chapel at Windsor, and that of Henry VII. at Westminster, it is to myself peculiarly dear, as having been the delight of my youth, and its study having led me to devote my life to the art of which it is so charming an example."

He gives the following general idea of the building:—"Though it is of the latest period of Gothic architecture, and as such would, perhaps, by some ecclesiologists, be almost excluded from the pale within which they could limit their admiration, it is carried out in every part with such extreme care, every detail, however simple, is so thoroughly studied, and designed with such exquisite refinement of taste, as not only to defy criticism, but to excite the greater admiration the more closely it is examined."

"It is one of those rare churches of which some are to be found here and there of every mediæval period, which bear evident tokens of having been designed and erected under some special and superior influence. It can hardly be said to be remarkable for extreme richness, though here and there some special point might be so described. Its great charm lies in its beautiful grouping, and in the faultless elegance of its detail. There is not a moulding, a corbel, a battlement, a pinnacle, or any other feature but what bears the impress of the care and loving study of a first-rate architect. This gives a charm to the minutest detail."

He then gives in detail the condition in which he found the various parts of the building, from which the following extracts are taken:—"The Church at the present time is in a deplorable state, and this sad condition has been arrived at, not so much by wilful mutilation as by neglect and want of timely repairs. The chancel roof has decayed to such an extent that its curious ancient plaster ceiling had to be taken down. . . . The lead covering is in holes, and during rain the water drops through the ceiling into the sacred edifice. The roofs of the other portions of the building

are nearly as bad. . . . The less substantial parts of the fittings have become more or less decayed or mutilated, and the whole looks hoary from mildew."

These extracts show that the term "dilapidated" was by no means too strong a one to use to describe its condition. The architect finishes his report by declaring the building to be "the choicest specimen of a village church in the county, and very few in England, of its period and scale, surpass or equal it."*

Most of the work contemplated by Sir Gilbert Scott in his report was carried out, and the Church re-opened by the Bishop of Oxford, June 16, 1875. Every old feature of the interior was thoroughly renovated and carefully restored. The north porch door was preserved, because it bears evidence of the civil wars, when the Church was besieged by Cromwell; bullets then fired being still embedded in it.

The Church is dedicated to All Saints, but it is sometimes referred to as St. Nicholas; the latter, however, is really the dedication of the south transept or chapel of St. Nicholas. The component parts of the Church are a west tower, a north porch, clerestoried nave with aisles, transepts, chancel, with a chapel and vestry on the north side, and at the north-east angle an octagonal turret. The tower, which was not re-built in 1493, is the oldest portion of the building as it now stands.

The windows were at one time filled with stained glass, and numerous fragments still remain in the tracery at the head of the lights. They represent various persons connected with the Church, and several of them can be identified, especially those remaining in the east window, which retains most of its original tracery. A modern stained-glass window has been erected in the south transept to the memory of Mrs. Louisa Nevler, who died in 1888, the subjects represented in the twelve lights being taken from our Lord's parables.

There is a monument to Thomas Denton, the first of the family who held the manor. It is of alabaster, of Renaissance character, and stands within the sanctuary. Denton is represented in armour, and at his side is his wife, richly habited. In the chancel is a monument to Dr. William Denton, physician to Charles I. and II. He died in 1691, aged 86. On the south side of the Church is a monument of a more modern description to Sir Alexander Denton (d. 1739) and Dame Catherine his wife (d. 1733). He was one of the Justices of his Majesty's Court of Common Pleas, and Chancellor to his Royal Highness Frederick Prince of Wales. This monument consists of a base of veined marble, supporting a sarcophagus of black marble, behind which rises a pyramid of jasper. On either side of the sarcophagus is a marble bust of Sir Alexander and his lady. Sir Godfrey Boate, of co. Tipperary, a Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, who was buried here in 1724, married a daughter of Alexander Denton; he was the subject of a curious satirical elegy and epitaph by Dean Swift. There are memorials to several other local families in the Church.

The interior of the Church exhibits some peculiar and interesting features. Below the roof of the chancel is a kind of cornice, having a range of figures of angels representing a choir. The four eastern-most on either side are instrumentalists, and bear respectively an organ, a guitar, a harp, and a violin; the remainder are singers, and bear labels only. The rood-screen and loft are of an elegant design, and well preserved, consisting of three arched bays, each

*These extracts are taken from Sir G. G. Scott's report on Hillesden Church, which appeared in Vol. IV., p. 309, et seq., of the RECORDS. As many members of the Society do not possess the volume these extracts are retained for their benefit.

sub-divided into four lights, with beautiful tracery. The windows of the south aisle contain figures of mitred abbots in stained glass; but the only part of the Church which retains the ancient figured glass in anything like a perfect state is the upper part of the east window of the south transept, known as the

ST. NICHOLAS WINDOW,

which is the most interesting feature preserved in the building. St. Nicholas, whose festival is on Dec. 6, was Bishop of Myra, the capital of Lycia. He was the patron saint of maidens and school-boys, and died A.D. 343. There are fifteen ancient Parish Churches in Bucks dedicated in his honour. There are a great many legendary stories connected with him, some of which form the subjects in the lights of the window in Hillesden Church.

The window is divided into eight lights by a transom. The old painted glass fills the upper four, and is a good example of the work of the end of the 15th century. There are four subjects represented in the eight lights—the first in panels 1 and 2, the second in panel 3, the third in panels 4, 5, and 6, and the fourth in panels 7 and 8. Each light has an inscription below it. Mr. A. H. Cocks gave an account of this interesting window.

PANELS NOS. 1 AND 2.

The Legend.—A certain man, on the birth of an heir to his estate, vowed to offer a golden cup on the Altar of St. Nicholas the first time he took his son to Church; but when the cup was made it was so wonderfully beautiful that the man determined to keep it for himself and have an inferior one made for the saint. On the way to make an offering of this cup he sent his son to get water in the cup he had appropriated to himself, and in attempting to do so the boy fell into the water and was drowned. The unhappy father repaired to the Church of St. Nicholas and thrice presented the golden cup, but every time it fell off the altar. While the astonished people were gazing in amazement the boy appeared on the altar step with the original golden cup in his hand, and said that good St. Nicholas had preserved his life and brought him thither. The father, in gratitude for the restoration of his son, offered both cups on the altar and returned home full of joy.

The Illustrations.—The first panel shows a ship in the background with three sailors hauling up the ropes, and the father looking over the side. In front is the boy falling headlong into the water. The second panel depicts the altar of St. Nicholas, with the father and mother kneeling in front and the boy with the golden cup in his hand standing behind them.

The Inscriptions.—(1) "Cedit puerulus, quem mox sal(va)t Nicholaus." (The boy falls, whom Nicholas presently saves.)

(2) "Tunc offert cyphum grates pro anime reddens." (Then he offers the cup, returning thanks for life.)

PANEL No. 3.

The Legend.—There was a terrible famine in the city of Myra, and on the arrival of some ships in the port laden with wheat St. Nicholas demanded that the captains should each give him 100 hogsheads of wheat for the relief of the poor, promising them that when they discharged their cargo they should find no diminution. The men believed him, and did as he requested them. On arriving at Constantinople they found that they had exactly the same quantity as they had received at Alexandria. St. Nicholas distributed the corn, which multiplied in his hands so that they had not only enough to eat, but also to sow their lands next season.

The Illustration shows the ships in the harbour and the captains handing over the sacks of wheat. Three of them are seen in the right-hand bottom corner. This being an event in the lifetime of St. Nicholas, he is depicted without a nimbus around his head, and dressed in the every-day costume of an ecclesiastic of the time. He is the figure on the left.

The Inscription.—"Multiplicat frugem presul quam nave recepit."
(The prelate multiplies the grain which he received from the ship.)

PANELS NOS. 4, 5, AND 6.

The Legend.—A certain Jew of Calabria stole an image of St. Nicholas from a church, and left it in his house when he went out to guard his goods, threatening the saint that if he did not keep good watch he would give him a thrashing. One day, on returning home, the Jew found that robbers had carried off all his treasures, and in pursuance of his threat he beat the image of the Saint and hacked it cruelly. That night St. Nicholas appeared to the robbers, and, exhibiting his wounds, commanded them to restore the stolen property to the Jew, who was so astonished at the miracle that he was baptized and became a true Christian.

The Illustrations.—The fourth panel shows the figure of St. Nicholas in the head of the light, and the Jew is seen departing, staff in hand, to the right. Four robbers, with a comical expression on their faces, are gleefully helping themselves to his treasures. The two in the foreground are already loaded with goods and chattels, while the two at the rear are laughing heartily. The upper portion of the fifth panel shows the infuriated Jew belabouring the image of St. Nicholas, and in the lower part is depicted the apparition of the Saint to the robbers, who are laden with the spoils of the Jew's house. In the sixth panel the Jew is seen on the left, and the robbers restoring to him their ill-gotten plunder.

The Inscriptions.—(1) "Que tulerant (fures) bona cogit reddere (presul)." (The prelate compels the thieves to return the goods which they had carried away.)

(2) "Auro furato baculo flagellat amicum." (He beats his friend with a stick for the loss of his gold.)

(3) "Restituit furibus latro quod sustulit aurum." (The robber restores again the gold which he had borne away.)

PANELS NOS. 7 AND 8.

The Legend.—A certain man kept the feast of St. Nicholas very solemnly every year. On one occasion, when the feast had been prepared and the guests were assembled, the devil, disguised as a pilgrim, came to the door and asked alms. The father directed his son to give alms to the pilgrim, and as the youth went forth the devil seized him and strangled him. When the father heard what had happened he fell on his knees and exclaimed "O, Saint Nicholas, is this the reward for the honour and adoration I have offered thee?" And lo, as he wept and bewailed, the youth opened his eyes and revived, as if aroused from sleep, and rose up.

The Illustrations.—The seventh panel shows the father and mother of the boy and some of the guests looking forth from the house, while in the foreground is seen the devil with both hands clutched round the neck of the boy, who has a plate in his hands, from which food is dropping on to the ground. The eighth panel depicts the Saint in the doorway and guests looking out of the windows of the house. In the foreground the youth lies on his back, and the father and mother, with friends behind them, kneel in an attitude of prayer by the dead boy.

The Inscriptions.—(1) "Strangulat (hic) demon puerum (frum)enta ferentem." (The demon strangles the boy as he is bringing him food.)

(2) "Mortuus ad vitam rediit precibus Nicholai." (The dead boy restored to life by the prayers of Nicholas.)

The letters inclosed within brackets are now missing from the inscriptions on the window. It is quite probable that the lower lights of this window were formerly filled with stained glass, depicting other miracles or legends connected with St. Nicholas, and in the head of the light below the last panel of the upper series may be read: "eledgite Nicholau i episcopu," which seems to be intended for "eligite Nicholaum in episcopum"—"Choose Nicholas for bishop." (See RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Vol. IV., p. 321, *et seq.*)

On the north side of the Church is a 14th century cross of stone, which Mr. Scott described as "an elegant erection, with an octagonal shaft rising from a bold and well-designed base on three steps, and retaining at its termination a part of a beautiful group of niches, with a fragment of one of the figures which they contained." Near the cross, in 1850, at a depth of about eight feet, were discovered the remains of about thirty persons, apparently of all ages, who seem to have been buried indiscriminately in a large hole, or pit. These may have been the remains of those who fell at the siege of Hillesden House. One account of that event gives the number slain as thirty; another account says forty.

A few members who travelled by motor car visited the Church of Preston Bissett, but for the generality of the members the visit had to be abandoned on account of the limited time at their disposal.

(The account of the Society's annual excursion was prepared by Mr. R. S. Downs for the *Bucks Herald*, and has been revised for the Society's publication).

THE GENERAL MEETING.

The General Meeting of the Bucks Architectural and Archaeological Society was held at the Society's Rooms on August 5th, 1903, General Sir Henry Smyth, K.C.M.G., F.S.A., in the chair.

The President and Vice-Presidents were re-elected. The Committee were re-elected, except that Mr. Thomas Thurlow was elected a member in the room of the Rev. R. W. Carew Hunt, who had left the county. The Honorary Secretaries, the Treasurer, and the Auditors were also re-elected.

The minutes of the last General Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Treasurer's balance sheet was read as follows:—*Receipts:* Balance, £18:18:11; subscriptions, £73:15; "Records," 16s.; total, £93:9:11. *Expenditure:* Rent, £6; caretaker, £4:18; printing "Records" on account, £27:9:1; Treasurer, per minute of Committee, £5; commission on subscriptions collected, £3:12; sundry payments, £4:13:3; balance in hand, £41:17:7; total, £93:9:11.

It was resolved that the Treasurer's report be adopted.

Mr. Parker reported that the volume containing the Thame Churchwardens' accounts had been recovered from the Bodleian Library, which he handed over to Mr. Cocks, the Curator.

It was proposed by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Darby, and resolved, that the thanks of the meeting be presented to the Sub-Committee for the recovery of the volume, and that it be kept in the Museum, and not be allowed to be removed therefrom without the sanction of the General Committee.

Mr. Parker called attention to the formation of the Society, and to the fact of the Society's publication having been first issued

in 1854, and suggested whether it would not be appropriate to have a Jubilee Celebration next year.

It was proposed by Mr. Cocks, seconded by Mr. Horwood, and resolved, that some form of Jubilee Celebration should take place in the course of 1904, and, if possible, it should last for two days, with a soirée, and possibly a dinner; the details, including the time of the year for the Celebration, to be left to the General Committee.

Mr. De Fraine reported that he had not found anyone on the spot to undertake the care of the Museum.

It was resolved that Mr. Cocks and Mr. Phipps interview Mr. Smiter with a view to his assisting the Curator in the work connected with the Museum.

It was proposed by Mr. Parker, in accordance with his previous notice, seconded by Mr. Williams, and resolved, that 5s. be the fixed price in future for each number of the RECORDS.

Exchanges of publications with the New Haven Colony Historical Society was left to the discretion of the Secretaries, and Mr. Cocks was asked to give the information sought by the Librarian of Congress, Washington, U.S.A.

It was proposed by Mr. Bradbrook, seconded by Mr. Parker, and resolved, that the thanks of the meeting be given to Mr. Cocks for organising this year's excursion, and that the Society refund him the expenditure of £1:2:6 defrayed by him in connection therewith.

The following gentlemen were proposed, seconded, and duly elected members of the Society:—Mr. W. A. Redington, High Wycombe; Mr. Herbert Edward Young, Claremont, High Wycombe; Mr. H. T. Dickens, High Wycombe; Mr. J. P. Stearns, Ray Mill House, Maidenhead; and Dr. J. C. Baker, Church Street, Aylesbury.

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