

## BUCKS CHURCHES.

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Notes are solicited for this column of works of any importance carried out or in progress, or any discoveries made, or any loss or injury by fire or otherwise in any of the old churches of the county during the current year. Communications should be sent to me at Marlow Place, Marlow.

W. NIVEN.

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### *St. Mary, Amersham.*

I am obliged to the rector for the following note: On May 7th, 1908, the 15th century side chapel was re-opened for use for daily services. It had been used from 1781 as a burial place, the (59) coffins being built into the walls in stacks, the passage-way between them serving as a coal store. On removing the coffins remains of a piscina, a niche in the east wall and some tombstones were discovered. The chapel was formerly known as Raans Chapel or Proby's Aisle, being the private property of the lord of the manor of Raans. When the Duke of Bedford held the manor, in 1777, he gave the chapel to the parish church. It was then apparently in a bad state of repair, and after being partly pulled down was converted into the late mausoleum. Below the floor was found the tomb of Sir Heneage Proby. The chapel has been restored as nearly as possible to its original form, and most of the old material used again.

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### *St. Dunstan, Monks Risborough.*

The decayed parapet on the south side of the nave has been replaced.

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### *St. Michael and All Angels, Stewkley.*

The modern west gallery has been modified to receive the organ. The vestry which it was proposed to build against the Norman south wall of the chancel, a scheme which our Society amongst others felt bound to oppose, has, I believe, not been proceeded with.

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### *St. Martin, Fenny Stratford.*

The nave has been extended, and a new south aisle built.

*Holy Trinity, Hledlow.*

The following reports are reprinted from the Annual Report of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, dated June, 1908:

At the request of the vicar, this church, which appears to have been built in the thirteenth century and which is of great interest, has been surveyed.

It consists of a chancel, nave with north and south aisles, south porch, and western tower. With the exception of the roofs, little alteration to the fabric has taken place.

The walls are well built of flint work, with stone dressings to the angles and openings; and, with the exception of the chancel and tower, which are plastered, all this work is visible. The interior of the chancel walls appears to have been replastered and is treated with colour, dark chocolate below the stone string course at the level of the window sills, and yellow above, stencilled over with modern work.

The windows are extremely beautiful.

The east wall of the chancel is cracked through the three-light window, from the ground upwards; and two other cracks, recently repaired, are apparent on the outside, on either side of the window. The south wall also is cracked over the small modern doorway, in front of which an organ, unfortunately, interferes with the surroundings.

The roof, of flat pitch, is well constructed with good tie beams, purlins and rafters, covered with oak boarding and cast lead in good condition.

The floor is paved with stone. The fittings, of oak, are modern. The new oak screen across the chancel arch was inserted in 1897. It has a heavy cornice which cuts the line of the arch very awkwardly.

The nave arcade is of four bays with pointed arches resting on circular piers with finely carved caps. The clerestory has three three-light windows, of later insertion.

The original stone weathering over the high pitched roof still exists on the east face of the tower, and reaches to the underside of the belfry window. There is a similar weathering on the east wall of the nave, shewing that the pitch of the chancel roof was a few feet lower than the old roof of the nave.

The present roof of the nave is constructed of oak, and appears to be sound. It is covered with deal boarding and cast lead in fair repair. The lead flashing at the junction of the tower is defective and lets in wet.

The north wall of the nave leans outwards—considerably so at the centre—nevertheless, it shews no signs of cracks. The walls inside retain the old plaster, with portions of what appears to be the original colour decoration.

The boarded floors are raised three inches above the passages, which are paved with stone.

The north aisle retains an older roof than the nave. It is constructed with oak, in fair condition, and is covered with cast lead. The east wall shows signs of damp, and so does the wall at the west end against the tower, apparently due to defective down pipes.

The niche at the east end of this aisle and the two-light window appear to have been inserted in the position of an earlier window.

The eastmost and westmost windows in the north wall seem to be the original openings; but the middle window was probably inserted a century later. On its west is the north doorway, which has a semicircular head. The walls internally appear to retain their original plaster, portions of which have been renewed. On

the wall at the east side of the north doorway are the remains, in a very dilapidated state, of a painting of St. Christopher.

The roof of the south aisle is similar to that of the north, and seems to be in fair condition. The window at the east end is built up on the outside, and on the inside has been erected an altar which has a seventeenth century reredos and a painting of interest.

The large four-light eastmost window in the south wall appears to have been inserted in the fourteenth century, and is a fine specimen of the work of the period.

The south porch seems to have been added late in the fourteenth century. The east wall is cracked close to the south angle. The inner doorway is a beautiful and rich example of thirteenth century workmanship, in good condition. The two-light windows on either side of the doorway are similar to the original windows in the north aisle.

There is a small early thirteenth century window in the west wall of the south aisle; and another, somewhat later, in the north aisle. Where the south aisle decreases in width, a half-arch is built across it in the form of a flying buttress, as an abutment to the tower arch. A similar half-arch has recently been constructed across the north aisle in like position, and a buttress built against the outside of the wall. The half-arch is continued up through the roof of the aisle in the form of a flying buttress to the north-east angle of the tower.

The aisle on the north of the tower is used as a vestry, and that on the south as a baptistry. To light the latter, a modern two-light window has been inserted at the middle of the wall. The front is opposite this window and is of Norman workmanship, richly sculptured. The west wall is cracked close to the angle.

The roof over the baptistry is modern, of deal, stained and varnished.

On the north, south and east sides, the tower is supported on very fine arches. The west side has a good doorway and two-light windows over it, which appear to have been inserted in the fourteenth century. The first floor, reached by a ladder, contains the works of an old clock, which are rather dilapidated. The beams supporting the floor appear to be fairly sound, but the boarding is rotten. To give strength, an additional beam is inserted under the middle of the old beams. Through the walls from north to south and from east to west, and a little above the floor level, are two tierods, on account of the serious cracks in the north and south walls. There is a small single-light opening in the north, south, and west walls at this level. High up in the east wall is a built-up doorway which gave access into the upper part of the old high-pitched roof.

The belfry contains a peal of five bells, four dated 1683, and the tenor 1847. The bell frame, of oak, is in fair preservation, but unfortunately on the east and south sides it abuts against the walls. The beams supporting the bell frame are in rather a bad condition.

A good two-light opening, in fair repair, occurs in each of the four sides of the belfry.

The saddle backed roof is constructed with oak timbers. The wet has been coming in through the cast lead covering, and has affected a portion of the ridge and one of the rafters; the timbers otherwise appear to be sound.

The stone corbel course and parapet on the top of the tower are rather loose.

The walls of the tower at the ground level are about three feet eight inches in thickness. They are built with flintwork, covered with stucco on the outside, which is much dilapidated, and allows the wet to soak into the walls.

The north and south walls are badly cracked through from above the arches to the parapet. These cracks appear to have been

caused in the first instance by uneven settlement, and, latterly, from the vibration during the ringing of the bells, owing to the bell frame abutting against the walls. A slight crack, which appears to be of more recent date, is visible in the south-east angle at the first floor level.

The exterior of the building is in fair repair. The chancel is overgrown with ivy, which appears to have gained a firm hold on the walls and around the openings and buttresses.

A report was forwarded to the vicar in which the works of repair necessary for the preservation of the building were set forth in detail, and the committee understands that efforts are being made to raise the funds required for carrying out the Society's recommendations.

### Little Hampden Church.

(Dedication unknown.)

The work of uncovering the wall paintings on the walls of the nave of this building has been completed.

On the north wall, west of the doorway, which seems to be of later date than the original fabric, was uncovered a tall figure painted in red line on the old yellow plaster, probably in the thirteenth century. It appears to represent Christ holding in the right hand a staff, with a cross; at the feet are three fish. The figure is draped with a loose cloak reaching to the knees, hung from the shoulders, and caught up under the right arm. Under the cloak a sleeved tunic of red is exposed at the neck, knees and arms.

Immediately east of the doorway, on the lower part of the wall, is a painting on the old yellow plaster, in red line, of the head and shoulders of two figures, facing one another. Between them are two posts supporting two keys and a sword, from which it would appear that the figures represent St. Peter and St. Paul.

A little further east are the remaining portions of two heraldic lions, in red outline on the old yellow plaster. On the upper portion of the wall, and around the doorway, the plaster is white, possibly renewed in the fourteenth century. Directly above the doorway are the head and hands of a female figure, apparently holding something.

A little further east, on the white plaster, appear the bearded head and arms of St. Christopher. The right hand grasps a yellow staff, and the left arm supports the infant Saviour, of which only the head and arms remain. The subject must have taken up the whole height of the wall from the floor to the roof, covering the earlier figures of St. Peter and St. Paul. The figure over the doorway was probably the Nun holding the lantern.

During the process of removing the several coats of limewash it was discovered that this painting had been covered over, probably in the fifteenth century, by another painting, of which the red border and several stars were found.

The upper portions of the north and the south walls at the east end are ornamented with fifteenth century decoration, which continued across the east wall above the rood loft. Patches of modern plaster on the north and south walls indicate where the ends of the rood beams rested. The wall below the position of the rood loft shows traces of similar decoration. Much of this later ornament was in poor condition, and has been removed to expose the thirteenth century painting underneath. The work consists of a series of niches containing figures, with a band of foliage above and below, painted on the old yellow plaster. The chancel arch is evidently a later insertion, as it cuts into the niches, and the plaster immediately around it is similar to the white plaster on the upper portion of the south wall.

The south wall appears to have been replastered in the fourteenth century. Of the earlier yellow plaster there remains only a small patch at the east end, and the jambs of the old doorway at the west end, now converted into a window.

The plaster surrounding the jambs and arch of the eastmost window appears to have been renewed in the eighteenth century, when the present brick mullion and head were inserted. The name of the churchwarden, William Wright, and the date 1762 is painted on the plaster above the arch.

The subject over the archway of the original south doorway appears to be the weighing of the good and of the evil souls. The central figure is a saint, holding in her left hand a balance, on one end of which stands a devil, while another who squats below may have been suspended from it by a rope. At the other end is a sort of basket presided over by a saint, of whom the head and arms alone remain. In the basket are twelve faces, in outline, symbolical of the good souls.

Further east is the figure of a man holding a bow and arrow and driving down some small figures underneath. The subject appears to be the devil presiding over the lower regions. With this last subject are mixed up portions of a fifteenth century painting of St. Christopher crossing the stream. It would appear that when the painting of St. Christopher on the opposite wall perished, another, in the fifteenth century, was painted on the south wall, over the last subject described.

Still further east are painted grotesque faces, which may be connected with the figure holding a bow and arrow.

Below the window in the west wall are portions of a painting, the subject of which is not evident.

The removal of the numerous coats of limewash was a work of considerable time and patience. The paintings have been treated with a solution of refined size applied hot with a spray diffuser.

In addition to uncovering the wall paintings, the plaster on the interior of the nave has been repaired and—where there are no paintings—limewashed. The cracks in the east wall, over the chancel arch, have been repaired from the chancel side, by cutting out the loose walling and bonding together the solid portions.

The masonry of the chancel arch has been repaired and repointed.

The plaster and flintwork on the exterior of the building, where loose and decayed, have been repaired.

The porch, with the belfry over, is constructed with timber plastered in between. The plaster has been limewashed on the exterior surface so as to protect it from the weather.

The works have been carried out in accordance with the Society's usual method, under the personal direction of the architect on the building.