

THE ROYAL LATIN SCHOOL, BUCKINGHAM.

(Chapel of St. John Baptist.)

Considerable alterations have recently been made in the management of this ancient foundation, and it has been suggested, therefore, that some account of it might be interesting to the readers of the RECORDS. As early as the first year of their publication (Vol. I., page 66) an account of the building in which the School was then (and until recently) conducted was given, under the heading of "Desecrated Churches of Bucks," by the Rev. W. Hastings Kelke, hon. secretary, and that account, supplemented by a circular appealing for funds in 1857, gives the history of the School and the buildings up to that date.

Mr. Kelke wrote: "The building, now used as the Grammar School, was originally a Chantry Chapel, dedicated to St. John Baptist and St. Thomas of Acon, and founded by Matthew Stratton, who was Archdeacon of Buckingham from about A.D. 1219 till his death in 1268. . . . This chapel, having become dilapidated, was rebuilt or restored by John Ruding, Archdeacon of Bedford, and Prebendary of Buckingham from A.D. 1471 till his death in 1481." Browne Willis wrote of this chapel: "Over the altar, on the boards of the ceiling, was depicted an holy lamb bleeding, and on each side two angels or monks, with cups to catch the blood. Underneath the lamb was St. John Baptist's head in a charger, and Ruding's motto, **All may God amende**; which was remaining till 1688, when it was destroyed as a relict of Popery by the school-boys. The rest of the work was decorated with crescents and escallops, as were the panes of the windows and the back of the master's seat, being Ruding's arms, as in Buckingham chancel windows." After the chantry services were suppressed this chapel was converted



CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST
(ROYAL LATIN SCHOOL),
BUCKINGHAM.

into a schoolroom, and was endowed with £10 8s. 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a year by Edw VI. from the property belonging to St. Thomas of Acon's College in London. . . . its consecrated precincts, especially as they have been used for sepulture, should have been more respected. . . . When the old parish church fell down in 1776 all the materials were sold; and from the general wreck about eight or nine bench-ends were purchased by the then master of the Grammar School. . . . Two of these are of good design. . . . These bench-ends are doubtless what Lysons mistook for "the original pews" of the ancient chapel.* The wood-cut illustration to Mr. Kelke's paper was taken from Lipscomb.

The circular of 1857, referred to above, attributed the erection of the chapel with "its Norman doorway" to A.D. 1260;† the east window and one on the south side to Preb. Ruding; and, with regard to the master's house, it tells us it was built, attached to its north side, "on the site of the dwelling of the "chantry-priest, subsequently of the school-master, ". . . . burnt down in 1683, by Alexander Denton "in 1690."

Mr. Cox was appointed Master in 1896, and the School became in a most flourishing condition under him, he being allowed to have a number of private boarders. When, however, the County Council Education Committee proposed to start a Secondary School at Buckingham, it was at once seen that this would annihilate the old School (the fees being at such a much lower rate), so the Charity Trustees, as managers, arranged to transfer the School to a new building to be erected out of the County Fund on the Chandos Road, Buckingham, which was accomplished on the 16th October, 1907, under the order of Scheme published by the Board of Education for the purpose.

* Information communicated to Mr. Kelke by the Rev. H. Roundell, then Vicar of Buckingham.

† There seems to be some mistake here. A doorway of pronounced Norman style must have been erected long before 1260. If Archdeacon Stratton was indeed the founder of this chapel, a possible way of accounting for the doorway may be found in supposing it to have been brought hither from some disused, destroyed, or semi-ruinous Norman building in the neighbourhood.



DESK ENDS, FORMERLY IN PARISH CHURCH,
BUCKINGHAM.

The former premises, which still remained the property of the Charity Trustees, had then to be dealt with in some way, and it was resolved to sell off the Master's residence (erected in 1690), which had become somewhat dilapidated, and it was purchased by Mr. C. A. Bennett, the adjoining owner, at £330.

The old Chantry Chapel is still left intact, and several schemes for utilising it as a Church Room, or Public Library, etc., are in consideration, but nothing has at present been decided upon. It is proposed to hand over the legal Title from the present School Governors to the National Trust for Preservation of Ancient Monuments. Fortunately some of the pew ends mentioned by Browne Willis, and in the circular referred to, are still preserved, and a photograph of same is annexed, also one of the exterior of the building as it now exists.

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