

INSCRIPTION RECORDING THE BUILDING OF ST. CHAD'S  
CHURCH, STAFFORD.

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Inscribed stone in St. Chad's Church, Stafford.

THE church of St. Chad at Stafford is undergoing a thorough repair and restoration. The older parts of the building are of the twelfth century; the nave and west front very richly ornamented, the chancel less so. Between the two there has been a Norman tower, but in the fourteenth century it was replaced by a new one. As it happens that the Norman work is of excellent hard stone, and still quite sharp, while the tower is of the most friable stratum of New-Red-Sandstone ever found, the inhabitants at large overlook the antiquity of the earlier building, declaring their crumbly red tower to be "the oldest church-tower in the county." Without drawings, it would be to little purpose that we should describe the various parts of the fabric. We may note, however, that the nave arch of the old work is semicircular; but just within it is a second arch with pier, in the pointed style; while the chancel arch, formerly round, has been supplanted by a pointed one; all below the impost being of the original Norman work. These changes were no doubt necessitated by the additional strength required for the new tower, which was probably much loftier than the first one.

The specially curious feature of the building is the inscription on the abacus of the chancel pier, of which we offer a drawing. It is 12 ft. from the floor, has a pillar beneath, of the twelfth century (with the rest of the cap), and above, the supplemented pointed arch before noticed. The carving is as sharp as if it had been done but yesterday. Why the carver cramped himself up so much to the right, and wasted so much space to the left of the inscription; why he carried his guilloche through four-fifths of the stone, and occupied the rest with fleurs-de-lis, must be left for solution to the Free and accepted Mason.

Inscriptions commemorating the building of churches (such at least as are contemporary) are very rare. The collection of them in Pegge's *Sylloge* is well known, and what is curious, one of the most striking of his examples bears the same name of "Orm" as the Stafford memorial. At Kirkdale church, in Yorkshire, a stone 7 ft. long has:—  
 ORM GAMAL SVNA BOHTE SCS GREGORIVS MINSTER DONNE  
 HIT ðES ÆL TOBROCAN T TOFALAN CHEHITLE T MAN NEÐAN  
 FROM GRVNDE XRE T SCS GREGORIVS IN EADÐARD DAGVM  
 CNG IN TOSTI DAGVM EORL T HAÐARD ME ÞROHT T BRAND  
 PRS. (Plate ii., page 20.) "Orm, Gamal's son, bought St. Gregory's church when it was all broken and fallen. Chehitle and others renewed it from the ground, to (the glory of) Christ and St. Gregory, in Edward's days the King, in Tosti's days the Earl, and Hawarth me wrought and Brand the priest." Earl Tosti (of Northumberland) was slain at the battle of Stamford Bridge, near York, in 1066.

Much resembling the Stafford inscription is that of Ulf at Aldborough, in Holderness (No. 12 of the *Sylloge*):—"Ulf het aræran cyrice for Hanum and for Gundhart saula." Ulf lived in the time of Edward the Confessor. Still earlier, and illustrating the Stafford legend by the use of the word conditor, is the example at Jarrow, c. 684; where the building of the church by abbot Ceolfrid, in the reign of king Egfrid, is commemorated:—"Dedicatio basilicæ Sci. Pauli VIII. kl. Mai anno XVI. Egfridi reg. Ceolfridi abb. eiusdem Q. eccles: do: auctore conditoris anno III." (*Syll.*, No. 8.) Then (*Sylloge*, No. 5, temp. Hen. II.) we have Adam, the "restorer" of Warnford church, Hampshire:—"Wilfrid fundavit, bonus Adam me renovavit." This, again, illustrates the Stafford inscription, by the church itself proclaiming the

builder. About the same time occurs the stone-writing in Hawksworth church, Nottinghamshire :—"Gauterus et uxor ejus Cecelina fecerunt facere ecclesiam istam in honorem Domini nostri Jesu et beatæ Mariæ virginis et omnium Sanctorum Dei simul." (Ibid., No. 28.)<sup>1</sup>

But what imports us to inquire is, Who was the Orm of the twelfth century, concerned in the building of St. Chad's church at Stafford? We venture to overpass the Orms of the northern and eastern parts of England, because, finding similar names in the midland district (in Staffordshire and Derbyshire), it appears more likely that one of these proprietors was the person in question. As to the *name* of Orm, there seems good reason to consider it Danish; for we find many settlers of this name in the northern and eastern regions, while (following Domesday Book) they do not appear in the south.<sup>2</sup> And "Ormsby," occurring in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, and Norfolk, seems clearly a Danish name—"the town of Orm."

One of the Midland Orms was fixed at Darlaston, near Stone in Staffordshire. Of him, Erdeswick ("Survey of Staffordshire") says: "The Biddulphs do derive themselves from one Ormus le Guidon, I think the son of Ricardus Forestarius. \* \* \* I have seen evidence to prove that Ormus was lord of the manors of Buckenhall, Dorlaweston (vulgariter Dorlaston) juxta Stone, Fenton-Culverde, Biddulph, Tunstall, Chaddersley, Chelle, and Normanscote.<sup>3</sup> He lived either in the Conqueror's time, or in the next succeeding age. He had issue Robert, born of the daughter of Nicholas Beauchaump, sheriff of Staffordshire." Then, from the Burton Abbey Register, we learn: "Hæc conventio facta est inter Gaufrid. abbat<sup>m</sup>. Burton et Ormum de Derlaveston. Facta est autem in capitulo coram fratribus concedentibus ipsis monachis. Concessit, inquam, eis Derlavestonam pro IX. sol. quoque anno, ita firme, ut nunquam eam perdant, neque pro presentibus, neque pro futuris

<sup>1</sup> An instance of a somewhat recent discovery of such an inscription has occurred at Netley Abbey, Hants, where the words "H. Di. Gra. Rex. Angl.," and on one side of them a crown, on the other a shield bearing three lions, were found on the base of the clustered shaft of the tower arch of the church.

<sup>2</sup> See Ellis' "Domesday," where, in

the list of Orms holding manors *in capite* previously to the Survey, are many entries under Yorkshire, and some in Lincolnshire and Cheshire. At the time of the formation of Domesday, Orms, as under-tenants, appear in Derbyshire (vol. ii. pp. 192 and 362.

<sup>3</sup> All in Staffordshire.

monachis, vel aliis hominibus. Ipse autem Ormus vel idem filius ejus debent hospitari abbatem quando voluerit, et debent eum juvare de suo sicut dominum suum cum opus habuerit, et debent ei invenire vel seipsos, vel homines ejus, si necesse fuerit." Other advantages await Orm and his son: "Cum vero mortui fuerint, deferentur eorum corpora sepelienda apud Burtonam, et multum honorifice recipientur a monachis. Debet autem cum eis afferri et tota pars eorum pecunie quantamcunque habuerint, et in omnibus rebus et in omnibus locis." Lady Derelaveston is to enjoy the same privilege: "Similiter et de uxore Ormi fiet quando morietur," &c. (Harwood's *Erdeswick*, pp. 4 and 5; where may be seen other conventions between the Abbots of Burton and descendants of Orm.)

Turning now to the Monasticon, we find among the charters of the Priory of Tutbury (Tutbury is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Ireton) the following "Carta Roberti comitis junioris de Ferrariis," of about the year 1141. It records divers gifts of the earl himself, and then of the "homines et fideles avi mei, et patris mei, et mei." Among the latter we read that "Ormus dedit duas partes decimarum domini sui de Yrton." (*New Monast.*, iii., 392, *Old ed.*, i., 355). The architecture of St. Chad's church well accords with this date of 1141. From a Cowcher book, t., Hen. V., quoted by Sir Oswald Mosley, in his *History of Tutbury*, we learn that Yrton, alias Ireton, was a place near Kedleston, in Derbyshire (p. 338). Earl Robert, named above, died in 1162, and was buried in the Abbey of Mirevale, in Warwickshire, which he had founded. (*Ibid.* p. 9.)<sup>4</sup>

Whether this last-named Orm, the "man" of Earl Robert, is the same person as the preceding Orm of Darlaston, I do not venture to decide.

But there is yet another and a powerful Orm among the Staffordshire thanes of this remote time. Under Okeover, *Erdeswick* has: "At the Conquest, one Ormus was lord thereof, who had issue Raufe, who had issue Adam, who had issue Sir Hugh," &c. This Sir Hugh lived in the time of Henry III. But, going back to Henry I., we find that: "In the extent of lands of Burton Abbey, t. Hen. I. and

<sup>4</sup> Henry de Ferrars and Margaret his wife granted to Tutbury Priory "the tithe of the skins of stags taken by

the dogs of Earl Ferrers, which they had by hereditary right." (*Mosley's "Tutbury,"* p. 260.)

Abbot Nigel, Ormus holds viii. bovats of warland and iii. of inland" (Shaw's Staffordshire, vol. i., p. 22). The Register of Burton Abbey gives us this charter of Abbot Nigel: "Ego frater Nigellus, Dei gratia abbas Burtoniæ, dedi, in capitulo nostro, et omnes fratres mei mecum, terram de Acovere,<sup>5</sup> Orme; hac conventione, ut unoquoque anno nobis xx. oras persolvat; et proinde factus est homo noster, &c. \* \* \* Cum autem mortuus fuerit, deferre ad nos se faciat, cum tota pecunia sua, ad sepeliendum: quo sepulto, filius ejus in capitulum nostrum veniet, daturus pro relevatione ipsius terræ tantum pecuniæ quantum nobilis homo dare debet pro tali terra," &c. (New Monasticon, vol. iii., p. 41.)

It would be to little purpose that we should prosily discuss the balance of conjecture as to the claims of the persons named above; but it seems permitted us to hold that a Staffordshire Orm built the church of St. Chad at Stafford. Whether Biddulph or Okeover now represents the venerable "conditor" of the twelfth century must be considered and settled by each particular reader of these lines.

[Touching Saint Chad himself, we may note that he had a brother, also a bishop, named Cedd. Of course both their names were frequently Latinized, so that, with Ceadd and Ceadda, Cedd, Cedda and Chad, there arises an imbroglio that is often most perplexing to the antiquary. While this manuscript is in hand, we receive a notice of a sculptured coffin-lid found in the churchyard of East Tilbury, Essex, which we are told is firmly believed by the villagers to be the coffin of St. Chad. Bishop Cedd, who ministered in this neighbourhood, "at Tillaburg on the banks of the Thames" (Tilbury), was buried, Beda tells us, at the monastery of Lestinghæ; and he never attained the honours of canonisation, which fell to the lot of St. Chad of Lichfield (Beda, caps. xxii. et xxiii.).—Ed.]

<sup>5</sup> Ac, oak; now Okeover near Ash-bourn. The family of Okeover still holds it. Distance from Stafford twenty-one

miles. Darlaston is seven miles from Stafford.