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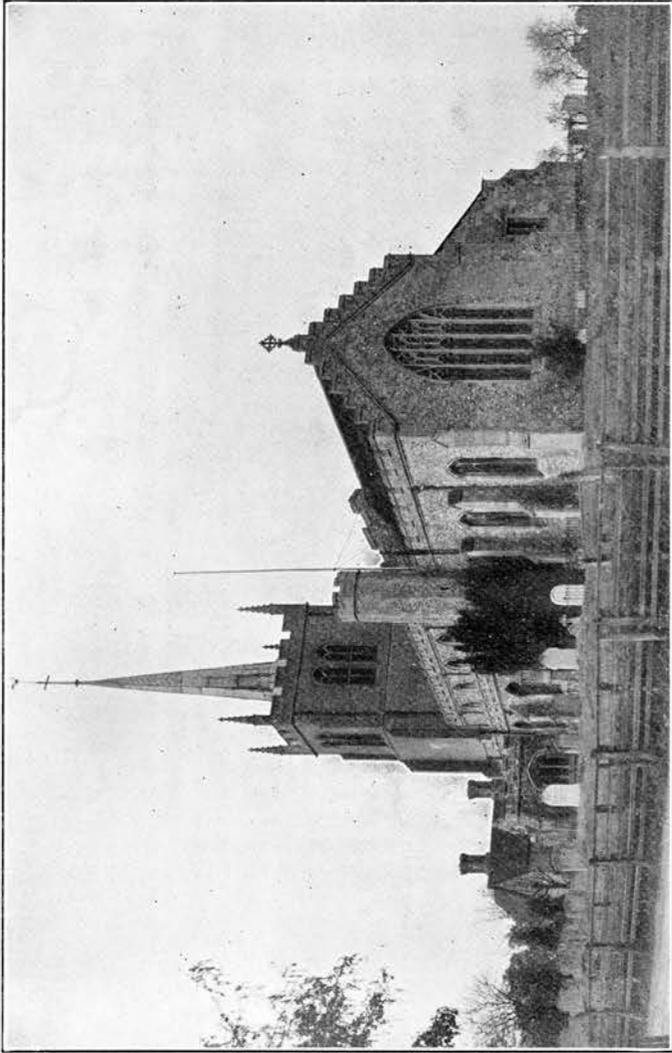


Photo by

GUILDEN MORDEN CHURCH, CAMBS.

W. Tams.

GULDEN MORDEN PARISH CHURCH.

In the reign of William the Conqueror, there lived in Cambridgeshire a certain nobleman, by nation and lineage a Norman, named Picot, who exercised the office of Sheriff in those parts. The King bestowed upon him a wealthy barony in Cambridgeshire, and enriched him with other great honours and possessions in different parts of the kingdom.

Hugolina, the wife of Picot, had Saint Giles for her patron saint; and once falling seriously ill, she promised, that if she should regain her health, she would, after her recovery, dedicate a monastery to Saint Giles, and entreat her husband to carry out the vow. She recovered in three days. After consulting Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Remigius, bishop of Lincoln, they founded a Church and offices sufficient for that time, in honour of Saint Giles for six canons regular near the castle of Cambridge.....They conferred upon these canons the patronage of Churches belonging to them within the confines of the province.....Picot gave them a charter at the request of his wife Hugolina, in which he says, "Yielding to the advice of Remigius, and the entreaties of Hugolina, my wife, I have made over to the canons regular of Saint Giles, the Church of Saint Giles, where their house is founded, the CHURCH of MORDON with the CHAPEL of REDDERIA..to have and to hold with all freedom." Although the Land and Property of the Parish is mentioned in Domesday Book as being held (1080-1086) by Picot the sheriff who lived at Bourn, the Bishop of Winchester, Hardwin de Scalers who lived at Whaddon, Roger (the earl) and Goisfrid de Mandevile, the earliest mention of the Church is in the above-quoted grant to the Canons of St. Giles.*

* I owe this to notes from a copy of Dugdale's *Monasticon* VIII. I., and the Cole MSS. Vol. XXII in the British Museum, made by my predecessor the Rev. J. R. Wilson.

It will be observed that the Chapel of Redderia is mentioned also. This has long since been pulled down, the beams, it is said, still forming part of the present barn of Duck Lane Farm, some two hundred yards north of this Church. The site of the Chapel is close to the Parish Clunch Pit on the west side of Ruddery Lane near Ashwell. I may here express the wish that the Archæological Society would scientifically examine the cemetery (whether British or Roman I know not) at the pit, before it is totally destroyed, piece by piece, by the diggers of clunch.

It will have been noticed that the mention of the Church of Morden as being given to St. Giles, implies that it was not built on that occasion, but existed before. How much before we know not.

The font has been described as Saxon, but personally I should place it rather late in the Norman period, say the reign of King John, about 1200. Other Norman portions are the two Corbels on the Tower Arch, and the three gargoyles on the south side of the Nave.

The earliest Arches are the three on the south side immediately behind the pulpit, which are Early English; the rest of those in the Nave are of various dates in the Decorated period. In connexion with them I may mention in particular the head of the old lady forming the corbel of one of the arches on the north side, for the head-dress that she wears is of the same pattern as that worn by Queen Philippa in a picture of her as foundress of Queen's College, Oxford, in 1340. Judging, by the bye, from the broken connexion of the arches on the south side, it appears that the church was once almost in ruins, and the arches were built as opportunity, and presumably money, were found.

The glory however of the Decorated Period, and I should suppose somewhat late in it, is, of course, the Screen. It is said that there are not more than five others at all resembling it in the whole of England. The enclosure on each side formed a small chapel. Over it probably the choir used to sit.

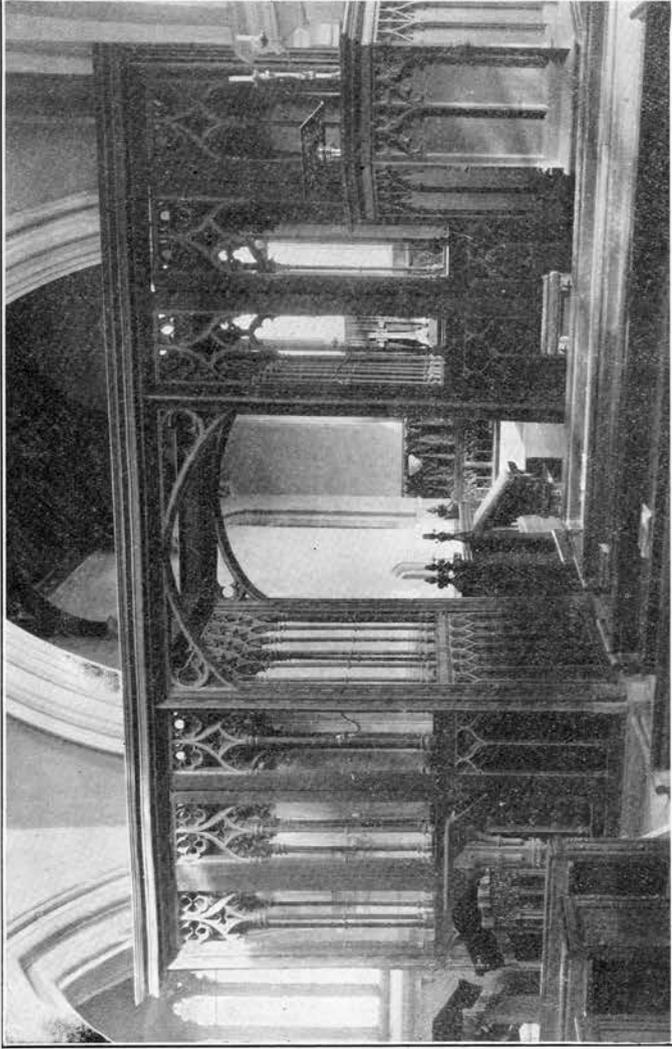
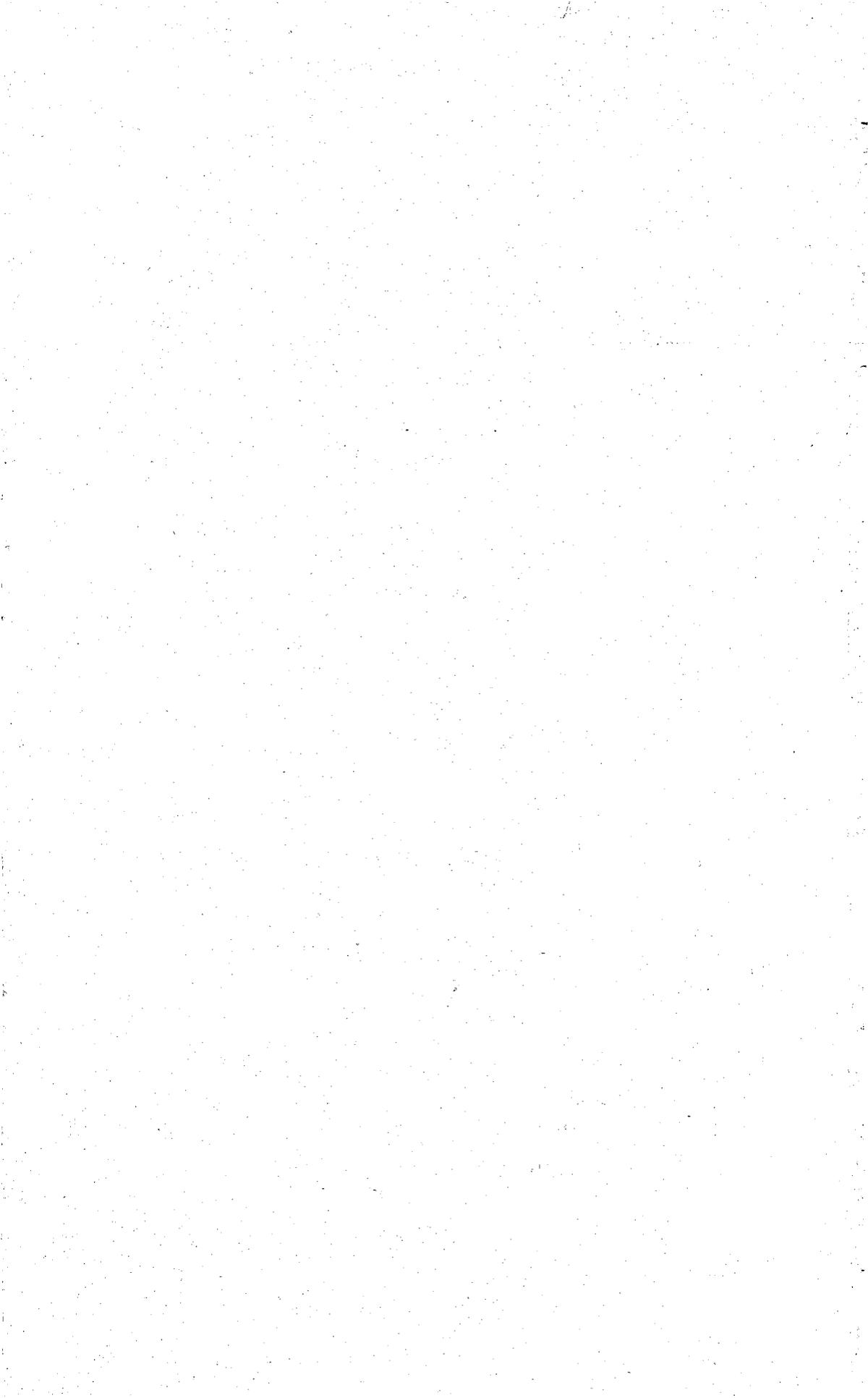


Photo by

THE SCREENS, GUILDEN MORDEN CHURCH, CAMBS.

W. Tams.



The supposition that the priest used to go up once a year to read the Gospel is precluded by the fact that the door and staircase are so narrow that he could hardly have passed through in his heavily brocaded cope.

There is an interesting inscription on the Screen in monkish rhyming Latin, beginning on the north side, and also two pictures, one of St Edmund, King of East Anglia, killed in 870,* and the other of St. Erkenwald, brother to St. Etheldreda of Ely, and Bishop of London in 675. That he was indeed a remarkable man is shown by the fact that the litter in which he was carried was, down to Bede's day, the means by which many miracles were performed. Bede himself tells us so. What better evidence can we desire?

There is a good deal of Perpendicular work, in particular the Tower. The Spire is later, but very far from modern. From the fact that on its lead are the same arms as those on the outside of the Avenells House close by (at least the greyhound, the hart, and as it seems, the picks), and there dated 1680, we may presume that it was put up at about that time.

On the outside of the North door, which is very late Perpendicular work, are the two initials, T. G.; presumably those of the name of the gentleman who built it.

The Church was restored about the time of the latter part of the Crimean war. Local tradition tells us that the Churchwardens desired to sell the lead of the roof, which was very valuable just then, in order to meet expenses. Sir Gilbert Scott was shocked at the suggestion, warning them that he would have nothing more to do with the restoration, which had been entrusted to him. It is probably to the advantage of Archæologists that his remonstrance was unheeded, and that he sent down his plans and left the Churchwardens to carry out the work as best they could. In any case I know for certain that orders to pull down the Screen were actually given, and that it was saved only by the personal appeal of my

* The arrow renders the identification certain although the "restorer" of fifty years ago has written *Edwardus*.

informant (Mr. Chapman of the Avenells) to the Earl of Hardwick, as the landlord of the farms to which the pews in the screen belong. We may also be glad, I think, that the very interesting monument in the N. E. corner of the northern aisle still survives, erected by the daughter of Thomas Hobson, Gent. and Anne Humberston his wife to the memory of her first husband. The Thomas Hobson is the subject of two of Milton's early epitaphs. He owned a good deal of property in different parts of Cambridgeshire. Attention may also be drawn to roughly scratched sundials on one or two of the buttresses.

A last word as to the Vicars. The earliest mentioned appears to be Adam Deth de Ashwell, appointed by the Prior and Community of Barnwell in 1349. Neither he, nor any of his successors, is, so far as I am aware, known to fame, but three have left Latin writings on the wall, worthy of our attention. John Flint, 1625, prays "Christ prosper my work" Robert Bridges writes in 1640: "If you learn Christ, it matters nothing if you know nought else," and in 1642, "If you know not Christ, it matters nothing if you learn everything else." Richard Midgley, 1681, says: "Ad Te, quacunq; vocas, dulcissime Jesu." Unto Thee come I, wheresoever Thou dost call, most sweet Jesus. God grant us all a spirit like that of those quiet country parsons of Guilden Morden in the seventeenth century!

In the Book of Barnwell there is a singularly interesting account of "The ingratitude of Luke," Vicar of Guilden Morden, in not paying his dues to the canons of Saint Giles, and the way in which God took the matter into His own hands by his death, with the consequent discussion about his burial, etc.

A. LUKYN WILLIAMS

