

Notes on Tideswell Church, Derbyshire.*

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THE paper which, at your request, I now venture to read to you must necessarily be short, and in many particulars defective.

I assume that you are acquainted with Mr. Cox's excellent notes upon this church in his valuable work on the Churches of Derbyshire—a work which will increase in value every year.

I. A FORMER CHURCH.

Of the history of the church which preceded this present building we can, I fear, say very little. There are some traces, as I believe, of a former chancel on the eastern side of the present chancel arch. The wall at that place has been cleared of its coating of plaster at my own request, with some loss, it is true, to the appearance, but with some advantage, I think, to archæological investigations. I must also point out that the cement which now covers the walls of the transepts under the string course (except on the south side of the south transept) is but a renewal of cement or plaster which was originally intended, and was actually there when this present church was first built. The plastered portions were, I believe, originally decorated with colour. Some few remains of colour we detected, but in too small patches to aid us further. It is probable that the church which gave place to this large building was of much smaller proportions. It was at first, as you are aware, a chapel under Hope, until it became an

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independent Parish Church about the time of King John. You are aware also that it has had an unbroken connection with the Cathedral of Lichfield.

Considering the extensive remains of Norman and Early English work at Bakewell, and of old work at Hope (both churches having also an unbroken connection with Lichfield Cathedral), and the still more extensive Norman remains at Castleton, both in the castle and church there, we may reasonably conjecture that the church at Tideswell which preceded the present structure was of Norman or Early English work. The Peverils of the Peak, whose gifts still form portions of the endowments of the churches just named, held their castle at Castleton, surrounded by the parishes interested in their gifts.

II. WHY SO LARGE A CHURCH WAS BUILT AT TIDESWELL.

The size of this church seems to have been determined, not merely by the number of inhabitants, but in great part by the existence of one or more guilds at Tideswell before the North Transept of this church received the Guild of St. Mary, as re-founded under a charter from Richard II., in 1392. This charter of Richard II., re-founding the chantry of the Guild of St. Mary, from donations of the Foljambes and others (one bequest alone being 200 acres of land), throws great light upon the whole history of Tideswell Church. Without this document, procured many years ago by Mr. Benjamin Bagshaw, of Sheffield, then a student of law in London, from the British Museum, I should have been unable to understand this remarkable edifice. There are many other MSS. and papers relating to Tideswell and other places in Derbyshire, formerly collected by Mr. Wolley, of Matlock, and now in the British Museum, which ought, I think, to find a place in the records of your society. I may also express a hope that a copy of the old statutes of this Guild of St. Mary of Tideswell may be found by you in the Record Office or other repositories of such documents.

In accounting for the size of this church it would be an interesting inquiry what number of officers belonged to that guild, and what

number of chantry chaplains had seats in the great choir of this church. The extent to which the interests of commerce were served by such brotherhoods, and their influence on the liberties of England, must not entirely put out of view their distinctly religious and charitable objects. If, as I believe, this Guild of St. Mary (comprehending, as it did, the clergy, nobility, and work-people, male and female, of this district) more than occupied the place of our present sick clubs or Friendly Societies in popular regard, if, as I conjecture, it was established with a view to protect and further, in its secular aspect, the mining operations of the Peak, we gain some adequate notion of the reasons which may have determined the size and importance of this church. If your investigations should lead to the discovery of another old guild as existing in the South Transept, possibly under the name of St. Catherine (for dedications under the names of St. John the Baptist, St. Mary, St. Catherine, and the Holy Trinity, are sometimes met with in guild churches, as at Coventry), I shall not be surprised. The ancient guilds had some connection with education. In a letter which lately appeared in a church paper it is mentioned that Bishop Pursglove received part of his early education at Tideswell. I do not know on what authority this statement is made, but it is a matter of history that one of the chaplains serving in this church did obtain the post of school-master in the Grammar School, founded in Elizabeth's reign by Bishop Pursglove at Tideswell, after the dissolution of the chantries ordered in the reign of Edward VI.

III. WHEN TIDESWELL CHURCH WAS BUILT.

The date of this church might almost conclusively be fixed from a view of its ground plan. A more characteristic ground plan of a fourteenth century church could not be found. The building was begun and completed, it may be pretty confidently asserted, in the reign of Edward III.—a period in English history second in importance to none. Architecture cannot well be investigated apart from history. Referring to the times in which Tideswell Church was built, three prominent names meet us at once—the

representatives of principles which, taking shape at that period, will always be powerful in England. The English nation may be said to have grown to manhood in the times of Edward III., Wiclif, and Wykeham. In 1327, Edward III. came to the throne when a boy of 14. Three years before, that is, in 1324, both Wiclif and Wykeham were born. Powerful and often opposing forces were embodied in their lives and acts. Edward died in 1377, Wiclif in 1384, and Wykeham in 1404. In 1349 the plague called the Black Death desolated Europe, and was severely felt in this country. I will hazard the conjecture that the unfinished condition of Tideswell Chancel roof (as we found it) may have arisen from the disturbed state of the country at that time, and the engagements of the Foljambe family, on whose liberality this church at that time seems largely to have depended, as you may gather from an inscription on their tomb in the chancel under date 1358. In this fourteenth century occurred the well-known struggle between Rome and Avignon. At the time when Tideswell Church was built the municipal system was being developed from the guilds everywhere established. Take these events in all their bearings, and we may form some conception of the state of England when Tideswell Church was built. Perhaps we should not be far wrong in fixing on 1350 as the average date of this structure; the tower might still be going on in 1370. The date on the Foljambe brass in the chancel, 1358, as already named, is not inconsistent with this supposition.

IV. THE CHANCEL SCREEN.

A photograph by Mr. Keene, which I now produce, gives a view of the chancel with the old screen as we found it. The top of the screen, as it appears in this photograph, was put on in deal some sixty years ago, when what was called the Hucklow Loft was removed, and the church re-seated. The erection of the Hucklow Loft was effected by the authority of a faculty granted by the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield, under date July 20th, 1724. This faculty is now in my possession, and I here exhibit it; it is in Latin. It recites that Mr. Samuel Eccles, gentleman, a

parishioner of Tideswell, being resident with his family in the parish, had no seats or benches in Tideswell Church where he might attend service, and he humbly prays for liberty to erect, at his own cost, a loft over the entry into the chancel, 26 feet long and 10 feet wide, and, at the expense of the parishioners, to remove an old loft then existing over the chancel (*hyperstilium vetustum*) to the tower for the use and advantage of the singers.

The said gallery over the chancel was accordingly erected, but as to the form of the old loft which it displaced, and what became of it, we have no record. The present western gallery joining the tower, and lighted from the large window in the tower, was erected about sixty years ago, and the old gallery at the west end, whatever it was, taken down; but I have in vain endeavoured to ascertain what it was like, and what became of it. I cannot gather that it possessed any special architectural beauty.

Returning to the chancel screen, a glance at the photograph will show that its original design was too slender to support a rood loft, and yet a rood loft may have been early added as an afterthought. Two reasons may be alleged for this supposition—first, the existence of a square stone-staircase at the western side of the north corner of the chancel arch, some remains of which are now in the Vicarage garden, having been found under the boards at the spot where the stone-staircase stood, and identified by me by the aid of an old drawing and ground plan, made apparently about 1824. The erection seems to have been mistaken for a stone pulpit (I heard it once called by an old parishioner, the son of the celebrated Tideswell singer, Samuel Slack, who remembered it still standing, “the *old penitentiary*”). It was 6 feet square. The entrance to it was from the south, giving access to a small newel staircase, the entrance being about 4 feet 2 inches by 22 inches. The other reason for my regarding the old loft (*vetustum hyperstilium*) as an afterthought, is drawn from the chisel marks and indentations on the responds of the chancel arch. Care must be taken, however, not to confound these marks, nor those on the chancel side, with indentations necessitated by the erection of Mr. Eccles’s gallery in 1724. This is not an easy task. It has

been thought that the carved work now erected (temporarily or permanently) over the place anciently occupied by the Lady Chapel screen formed part of the original rood loft of the chancel. In this opinion I cannot concur. I should rather be inclined to assign it to the position which it now occupies, or to a similar position over the south transept. I found it used in two portions, adapted as book-boards to the ten old stalls in the chancel, five on each side, now removed, as you see them, to the Lady Chapel in the north transept. A portion of the old tracery-work, evidently belonging to some screen in this church, I have taken care to preserve in the middle compartment of the altar table in the chancel. The two pieces of carving on each side of it did not come from this church. You will, however, find two bits of screen-work—open tracery-work of great delicacy and beauty, preserved by me in a new oak erection in the Lady Chapel. These scraps of screen-work had been preserved in a house in Tideswell.

When the new pewing of the church, in 1825, was undertaken, great quantities of carved oak work were, it is said, carted away.

V. THE SIDE CHAPELS.

Near thirty years ago a warming apparatus was placed under the Lady Chapel, in the insertion of which some indications of old wall and of old brasses may have been removed, for the flooring of this Guild Chantry would probably contain some marks of local history. The two figures now placed here in this north transept are said to have belonged originally to the south side—the south aisle of the nave, probably—but their history is unknown. We have lately placed them in their present position to secure them from mutilation.

VI. THE MONUMENTS.

These have been often described.

In the chancel, the Foljambe brass, date 1358. This has been renewed.

The fine brass of Bishop Pursglove. 1579.

The tomb and brasses of Sir Sampson Meverill, in the centre of chancel, with emaciated stone figure underneath. 1462.

In the south transept chapel, the fine tomb and recumbent figures of Sir Thurstan de Bower and the Lady Margaret his wife, were restored in 1873, by the late John Bower Brown, Esq., of Woodthorpe Hall, Sheffield. The figures of Sir Thurstan de Bower and his wife were removed into a corner of the chancel from their present position (which is their original position), in the changes which took place at the re-pewing of the church in 1825-6.

The Lytton Chapel, in the south transept, contains a slab with brasses of Sir Robert and Lady Isabella Lytton, date 1458. The present Lord Lytton takes his title from this family. Lytton, now usually spelt Litton, is a hamlet and township in Tideswell parish. The shields on the Lytton brass disappeared, it would seem, many years ago.

The monuments on the walls retain their places without much change. Bishop Pursglove's brass had been raised on rubble limestone some inches from the ground, probably by some grateful recipient of learning in the Grammar School founded by him. It is now lowered to its original position.

VII. ANCIENT ARRANGEMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

These are indicated by the position of the various piscinæ, sedilia, and steps in the flooring, and by some marks on the walls where the old screens were inserted.

VIII. THE PULPIT.

No traces remain. It was probably moveable. The old loft at the chancel screen may have been used for preaching, but this is mere supposition. A wooden pulpit, with sounding board, stood at the pillar nearest the north transept at the beginning of this century. The present stone pulpit is entirely new.

IX THE NICHES.

The church contains two old niches outside, in the buttresses of the south transept (not unlike some to be seen at Linlithgow), and two in the modern bell turret lately erected over the chancel

arch. There are six niches inside. We have no account of what figures were in any of them. One of the chancel niches would probably contain a figure of John the Baptist, the church being dedicated in the name of St. John the Baptist; and the niche near the piscina in the Lady Chapel would probably contain the figure of St. Mary.

X. THE WINDOWS.

All the windows contain the original form of the tracery, and most of them the actual old tracery. Where renewal of the tracery has been absolutely necessary, the greatest care has been exercised to have an exact copy of the old. Some amount of painted glass there no doubt was at the first; where the old glass has gone to, or when removed, is not known. The elaborately painted eastern window of the chancel is the gift of Cecil G. Savile Foljambe, M.P., Cockglode, near Ollerton, at whose cost, also, the Foljambe brass in the chancel was renewed in 1875.

XI. THE BELLS.

They are six in number. They have all been re-cast except the fourth, which has the text, in Lombardic characters—" *Nomen habeo Gabrielis missi de cælis,*" referring to the prediction about the Birth of John the Baptist. Some of the rest were re-cast about 200 years ago. In addition to the six hung in the tower, there is a small bell just lately removed to the new bell-turret over the chancel, from the west tower, where it has hung in a temporary way for several years past. It may have occupied, and been intended to occupy, the old bell-turret on the chancel arch. The small turret which preceded the present bell-turret never contained a bell, but seemed to have served only to continue the tradition of the turret formerly existing there. The date upon the bell, curiously enough, is 1658, towards the end of Oliver Cromwell's government. When hung in the west tower, it was used, we understand, to communicate from below with the ringers, and formerly to indicate the entrance of the clergyman. Of the original bell-turret over the chancel we have no record. The one we found never had a bell. In designing a new turret

we were obliged to take the general character of the work of the chancel, and do the best we could.

XII. THE GENERAL FEATURES OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF TIDESWELL CHURCH.

The flowing line is observable throughout the windows. All of them, not excepting the almost unique square-headed windows in the chancel, belong, I need not say, to the Decorated Style of Gothic architecture. The windows of this church, the careful manner in which all the string-courses are managed, and the admirable proportions conspicuous throughout, make this building an admirable study of the perfection to which architecture had attained in the reign of Edward III. It would be difficult to find a specimen of beauty in proportion and detail, and of results in the way of convenient accommodation for worship and preaching at the present day so satisfactorily attained, with so true an economy of material and ornament. The walls and pillars are as compact as safety would permit. Economy of labour and space is conspicuous everywhere, and yet nothing can exceed the calm dignity of the elevations, and the practical utility of the general arrangements. They were not made as matters of fancy, but in accordance with the science of architecture, then well understood on fixed rules. The Decorated style in this structure produces the best results at a smaller cost, I think, than any previous or subsequent style could have procured. It is true the roof of the chancel, even at the first, was scarcely equal to its work, and was apparently hurried on, from some cause or other, without even waiting for the cap moulding inside at the top of the side walls. The cap moulding we have supplied by simply continuing the old moulding running on the western side of the chancel. The consecration crosses are still to be seen on the sides of the chief inner south entrance at the west end of the church. The absence of any vestry, except the sacristy at the back of the reredos in the chancel, must always have caused inconvenience, at least so long as the clergy did not occupy their rooms round the churchyard, or make temporary use of the side chapels for vestries.

XIII. RESTORATION.

This has been much admired. I have to regret, however, that in consequence of a mistake between the architect and builder, the pitch of the chancel roof was somewhat altered, notwithstanding the stipulation, carefully made, that no alteration of pitch in the roofs should occur. The difference is not much, but my repeated wish was that not the slightest alteration should be made. The original roof which we found on Tideswell Chancel was very simple, composed of small rafters, with a collar high up towards the apex, the eastern bay having evidently, as we saw by the nail holes, been boarded and illuminated. The footings of the rafters rested on the top of the wall, only kept in place by an oak wall plate. It was no wonder that such a construction should have pushed out the side walls at the top in the middle bays. The timbers were too decayed to admit of repair. Advantage was taken of the necessity of a new roof to lay hold of the side walls by hammer beams, supported on corbels some four feet from the top of the wall, and that without departing from the character of the roofs adopted in the 14th century. The character of the old stall work is seen by the ten stalls lately removed from the chancel to the Lady Chapel. What the original seats in the nave were cannot now be ascertained. The roof of the nave is original. The main timbers are sound, and will be retained, and the original pitch preserved unaltered. The small rafters and purlins require to be renewed, as well as the lead. This is being done, and additional supports made at the junction of the rafters and purlins. The roof of the Hermit's Chamber, over the south porch, has been restored. The old opening or squint from this chamber, made for keeping guard over the church, has been used to gain better access to the room, so that it may be used as a store-room for fragments and articles belonging to the church. In the early part of this century it was used as a bone house. The bells were, sixty or seventy years ago, rung from a small gallery over the western door of the tower, and communicating with another gallery used by the singers, which gallery then gave place to the present western gallery. The present gallery now

accommodates the Sunday scholars, and, though out of keeping with the church, and blocking the fine arch into the tower, is useful on some special occasions.

The stall work in the chancel is new, and the fronts of the book-boards are open, the carving being remarkably interesting. The old chancel screen is now under repair. The roofs of the chancel, the transepts, and the larger portion of the nave, have been renewed in oak and lead, in even a stronger manner than when the church was built. New stall work is ordered for the space between the side chapels in the transepts; and when this is done the main features of the restoration will have been firmly fixed. The *levels* of the church have been well preserved—an important point in all restorations.

XIV. BISHOP PURSGLOVE, THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, THE GUILD HALL OF TIDESWELL, AND MILLER'S DALE.

Into the history of Bishop Pursglove I must not now enter. Recent investigations at York have proved that he was consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Hull in Henry VIII.'s reign, and not, as generally supposed, in Queen Mary's—a point of considerable historical value, as throwing light upon the events of his time.

An investigation into the muniments of the Grammar School might possibly make it plain that the old, partly ruined building in the centre of Tideswell was the ancient Guildhall of Tideswell. Tradition would point also to the Cross Daggers Inn as having been formerly the abode of the female portion of the same guild united as a sisterhood. This is the more likely, as no religious house existed at Tideswell belonging to any monastery or nunnery.

At Miller's Dale, it is true, there was a small cell belonging to Lenton Priory, near Nottingham. Two carved stones evidently belonging to the entrance to the chancel of the old little chapel at Miller's Dale (date about 1360) are now in the Vicarage garden, having been brought from Miller's Dale. They are almost identical in design with the stone chancel screen at Chelmorton.

The brass on Bishop Pursglove's tomb is as perfect as when first

placed there, as is the inscription which goes round the edge ; but I venture to hazard the conjecture that the inscription at the *foot* of the figure of the Bishop has been placed there, as a substitute for a previous inscription, which probably had a stronger sheet of brass than exists now, more like the rest of the brasses on this remarkable tomb.

XV. INVESTIGATIONS STILL TO BE MADE.

The dedications of the side chapels in the transepts, except that of the Lady Chapel, have yet to be ascertained. This ought not to be difficult to any one who has ready access to the Augmentation Offices' documents in London, and the Chapter records at Lichfield.

Of the two chapels in the south transept the one nearest the south was probably endowed, in part at least, by some of the Meverel family. Sir Thurston de Bower may have married into this family. That the Stathams claimed some privilege of sepulture in that part of the church seems probable. The Lytton Chapel joins next. Its form can only be determined by the piscina and the flat stone containing the Lytton brass. Whether that stone occupies its original position I cannot say. The south aisle of the nave is two feet wider than the north aisle, and may possibly have contained smaller chantries surrounded by wooden parclooses, but this is mere conjecture.

In the north transept, besides the Lady Chapel, another chantry may have existed. No piscina, however, can be traced attached to this part of the church, which seems to have had some connection with Wheston.

What the exact form of the top of the chancel screen originally was, cannot, I fear, be ascertained. Care will be taken to preserve what remains, and to follow the marks on the responds in restoring the top.

The old statutes of the Tideswell Guild or Guilds may perhaps at some time be found in London.