

A Winter General Meeting of the Society was held on the 15th of March, when the Vicar of Ashburne, the Rev. F. Jourdain, read a paper entitled, "Some Notes on the Restoration of Ashburne Church, 1881-82." Mr. Jourdain's paper will be found in another part of the journal, and gives an exact account of the work done. It is well worth a journey to Ashburne to see the result of "restoration" carried out with a loving care for ancient detail.

The first expedition of the Society for the past year was held on the afternoon of the 13th of May, to Kedleston. The party, in number about ninety, drove from Derby, through Kedleston Park to the Church, where the Rev. J. Charles Cox explained the architectural features of the quaint old building, and pointed out the different monuments and brasses to members of the Curzon family, reminding his hearers that this family had possessed the Manor of Kedleston in unbroken male descent since the Conquest. By kind permission of Lord Scarsdale, the hall was next visited, the entire suite of state apartments being unreservedly thrown open to the inspection of the Society. After some time spent in examining the splendid rooms, pictures, china, and other art treasures, the party was most hospitably entertained by Lord Scarsdale at tea, and returned to Derby at six o'clock.

The next expedition was held on the 12th August, to Tideswell and Eyam. The party left Derby at 9.15 a.m. in special saloon carriages attached to the train for Hassop. From Hassop the party drove viâ Monsal Dale and Longstone to Tideswell, where they were received by the Vicar, the Rev. S. Andrew. Luncheon was taken at the George Inn, after which the Church was visited, and a paper read by the Vicar upon its history, architecture, and restoration. This paper appears in another part of the volume. The party afterwards drove to Eyam, where the Vicar, the Rev. F. Green, received them. Mr. Keene then read the following interesting paper on the

HISTORY OF EYAM.

"At the request of our Council, I have compiled a few notes on this interesting locality, principally from the exhaustive history

of my late friend, William Wood, and partly from my own observations on previous visits. But little can be said in the short time at my disposal, further than to indicate the principal objects of interest you have come here to see. Those who would know more about this 'Queen of the Peak,' as Eyam has been called, and its 'mighty woe,' should consult *Rhodes' Peak Scenery*, the *History of Eyam*, by William Wood, and *The Desolation of Eyam*, an early poem by William and Mary Howitt. Numberless other authors have written about this 'little mountain city,' and its self-sacrificing inhabitants of 1666, but most of them have drawn largely on the works I have named.

"The village and parish of Eyam, in the High Peak of Derbyshire, are in the Honours of Peveril and Tutbury, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Archdeacon of Derby, and in the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry. The village stands in the south-east part of the parish, and contains about 250 houses and 1500 inhabitants, chiefly employed in agriculture, lead-mining, and the manufacture of boots and shoes. It is principally of one street, nearly a mile in length, built on a ledge of mountain limestone, just where the sandstone strata commence.

"The origin of the name Eyam is open to doubt. In the Norman Survey it is written *Aiune*; in the 15th century *Eyham* and *Eham*. The Saxon word *ea*, water; and *ham* or *am*, a dwelling-place, would seem to indicate its derivation, for the village is abundantly supplied with springs and rivulets. Or, it may be that *ey* is a corruption of *high*; hence, high dwelling-place, equally applicable to its situation.

"I shall not trouble you with any remarks on the geology of this district, beyond the striking fact that, though the village is a mile in length, its single street—serpentine along the hill-side and following its contour—has its houses on the *south* side, all built on the carboniferous limestone; while on the *north* side, they are placed just where the shale and sandstone strata commence. So, to the *south* of the village you find nothing but mountain limestone, with its innumerable organic remains, caverns, and water-swallows; and to the *north* rises the superjacent shale and sandstones

to a height of 600 feet, capped by the basset of the millstone grit. This mountain range, with its plantations of trees, forms a screen to ward off the north winds and shelter the habitations below. A little further north, in the centre of the parish, rises the mountain called Sir William, from the summit of which a series of magnificent views are obtainable in every direction. But we need not ascend so high, for Eyam is surrounded by pleasant uplands, wild dells, and lovely landscapes.

“The Manor of Eyam, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, was held by Caschin, but at the survey of the Conqueror it was vested in the crown, and was granted by Henry I. to William Peveril, being held under him by the Morteynes of Risley. About 1307, Roger de Morteyne sold the manor and estate to Thomas, Lord de Furnival, of Sheffield, through whose female descendants it has continued to the present time. It is now the property of the Duke of Devonshire, 18th in descent from Thomas Lord de Furnival. The manor house has long disappeared.

“There was no church at Eyam when the Domesday Book was compiled, but one must have been erected soon after, for it is recorded, that in 1284, William de Morteyne was owner of the living or benefice. The present church, dedicated to S. Helen, consists of nave, north and south aisles, chancel, and tower at the west end. It underwent a partial restoration and enlargement in 1868-9. Mr. Cox says, ‘There is nothing Norman about the building excepting it be the circular font.’ On the south side of the chancel are four lancet windows of the Early English period; and another at the west end of the north aisle. The pointed arches of the nave and the capitals that support them are of the Decorated period; so is the archway into the tower, which was opened at the late restoration. To the same period are also assigned the small doorway at the west end, and the bell-chamber windows of the tower. The fabric was restored by Mr. Street, but the funds were not sufficient to carry out the work on the south side, where you will find some very ugly square-headed windows with square panes. The tower has a battlemented parapet, crocketed pinnacles, and projecting gargoyles. Over the

west window, a stone with the date 1615, and a lot of initials, has led to some controversy; it doubtless records the initials of churchwardens at a time when some of the alterations were made. One of the most notable things is the immense mural sun-dial over the south entrance, the design of a Mr. Duffin, clerk to a worthy magistrate in the neighbourhood, and executed by William Shore, a stonemason of Eyam; on which the parallel of the sun's declination for every month in the year, the scale of the sun's meridian altitude, the azimuthal scale, the points of the compass, and a number of meridians are all delineated. The roof of the nave still has its old beams and bosses, but all the ancient monuments have disappeared, and there is little of interest inside the building. Many of its ancient details were removed during the 'restoration.' Ruskin says (and I fear it is often only too true), 'restoration means the most total destruction which a building can suffer.'

"The churchyard has much to interest the visitor. Most conspicuous, the fine Saxon cross, with its rude carvings and somewhat elegant scrolls and interlaced knot-work, standing eight feet high; and though it will be noticed the upper stone of the shaft is missing, it is generally acknowledged to be the finest cross in England, and is of the same period and workmanship as the one in Bakewell Churchyard. Both were executed about the ninth century. The tomb of Catherine Mompesson, wife of the heroic rector of Eyam, next claims our notice—

'Where tears have rained, nor yet shall cease to flow.'

This tomb, near the chancel, has a chamfered stone pillar at each corner, as have several others in this churchyard; a peculiarity I have not noticed elsewhere. Mrs. Mompesson died of the plague on the 25th of August, 1666. On the north side of the churchyard, under the shade of the linden trees by which it is surrounded, lies Richard Furness, the poet, a native of Eyam. There is a tombstone close to the chancel door with a quaint inscription to, or rather *from*, Anne Sellars; and in various parts of this 'God's Acre' will be found poetical epitaphs from the pen of the accomplished Peter Cunningham, curate of Eyam from 1772 to 1790.

“On the moors above the village various barrows have been found from time to time, and urns containing ashes and bones and other ancient British relics have been discovered. There are also remains of what have been considered British huts or houses, composed of earth and stones in a circular form. Here also may still be seen the Druidical circle of stones on a part of the moor called Wet Withins; and on what is called Smith’s Piece, an enormous mass of gritstone, containing a rock-basin bearing evident marks of human agency. The lead mines here have been worked from a very early period, and traces of Roman occupation have frequently come to light. Besides the Saxon cross now in the churchyard, another once stood on Eyam Edge, and one at Cross-low, both of which have been destroyed.

“Apart from the local history of the place, Eyam is, however, of little importance; but suffering has sanctified its claim to notice, and it is to the fearful visitation of the plague in 1666 that it owes its fame.

‘And many are the pilgrim feet which tread
Its rocky steeps; which thither yearly go;
Yet, less by love of Nature’s wonders led,
Than by the memory of a mighty woe,
Which smote, like blasting thunder, long ago,
The peopled hills.’

“According to tradition, a box containing some cloth or clothes was sent from London in September, 1665, during the great plague there, to a tailor at Eyam. On opening the box, the clothes were found to be damp; a servant was ordered to dry them at the fire, and in so doing was seized with the plague and died; as did the rest of the household, excepting the wife. Hence the infection spread rapidly and with unprecedented violence, almost depopulating the entire village. You will see the house where the tailor lived still standing close by the west end of the churchyard.

“The desolation of Eyam is marked by peculiar circumstances—it was the last time the plague visited this country, and with a destructive effect never before recorded. A year previously, about one-sixth of the population of London fell victims to the pestilence; but at Eyam nearly *five-sixths* were carried off in the

summer of 1666, excepting a few who died at the close of 1665. This sequestered village, before the plague, contained about 350 inhabitants. The first who perished was buried September 7th, 1665, and the last on the 11th October, 1666; but it was in the hot summer months of July and August that it raged at its worst; 56 persons falling victims in the former, and 77 during the latter month. When we take into consideration that the number of inhabitants on the 1st of August had already been reduced to considerably under 200, the havoc is appalling.

“Terror-stricken, the poor villagers would long before this have fled from their loved homes, and spread the contagion over the country, had it not been for the heroic exertions of their pastor, the Rev. William Mompesson, aided by the Rev. Thomas Stanley, who energetically remonstrated with them on the danger of flight, and of the fearful consequences that would ensue; carrying as they did the seeds of disease in their clothing. Mompesson promised to write to the influential persons in the vicinity for aid, and that he would remain with them and do all in his power to help and succour them. The inhabitants, with superhuman courage, gave up all thoughts of flight. An imaginary circle, extending about a mile-and-a-half, was drawn around the village, marked by well-known stones and hills, which none were to pass, whether infected or not; and at several points on this boundary, provisions were brought, in the early morning, by persons from the adjoining villages. In cases where money passed, for extra or particular articles, it was deposited in water; as at the place now known as Mompesson’s Well. Another like place was on the Cliffe, between Eyam and Stony Middleton. The provisions and many other necessaries were supplied, it is supposed, by the Duke of Devonshire, who remained at Chatsworth during the calamity to render what aid he could. The wisdom of Mompesson, who is said to have originated this plan, is only surpassed by the courage of his flock in adhering to it; whom, as Miss Seward observes, ‘a cordon of soldiers could not have prevented against their will, much less could any watch which might have been set by the neighbourhood have effected that important purpose.’

“During the month of May, only four deaths occurred, but towards the middle and end of June, ‘the desolating monster stalked from house to house, breathing on the trembling inhabitants the vapour of death.’ The passing-bell ceased, the churchyard was no longer used for interments, the church was closed, funeral rites no longer read, and coffins and shrouds no longer thought of; but shallow graves, dug in the fields and gardens around their late homes, received each putrid corpse ere life was scarce extinct.

‘The dead are everywhere!
The mountain side, the plain, the wood profound;
All the lone dells—the fertile and the fair
Is one vast burial ground.’

“Besides those in the churchyard, only a few vestiges of these interments now exist. The Riley graves mark the spot where the Hancocks lie, on the sunny hill-side a quarter of a mile from the village; and a tabular tomb in the orchard of the present Riley House, close by, records the memories of the Talbot family, all of whom were swept away. Two in the town end are to the memory of George and Mary Darby; and one in a field, at the west end of the village, with the initials H. M., mark the resting place of Humphrey Merrill. But these memorial stones, once so numerous in fields and gardens, have been *utilised* at different times for paving and building; and it is much to be regretted that the inhabitants of Eyam did not treat both them and the green grassy graves of the departed heroes with more veneration and respect.

“When the church was closed through being considered dangerous to assemble there, Mompesson met his daily diminishing flock in the secluded dingle called the Delf, Delve, or Cussy Dell, a ravine running down from Eyam to Middleton Dale. Here he read prayers twice a week, and delivered his customary sermons on the Sabbath, from the perforated rock, since known by the name of Cucklett Church. From the rude portals of this rock, the youthful pastor addressed his scant flock.

‘A pallid, ghost-like, melancholy crew,
Seated on scattered crags, and far-off knolls,
As fearing each the other.’

Rhodes says:—‘Contemplating the scenery of this little dell, and calling to recollection the sublime incident by which it has been dignified and hallowed, I have always regarded it as a subject admirably adapted for the pencil.’ Is it possible to conceive a picture more truly sublime? Paul preaching at Athens, or John the Baptist in the wilderness, scarcely excites a more powerful and solemn interest than this minister of God, this ‘legate of the skies,’ when contemplated on this trying and momentous occasion, ‘when he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.’

“Mompesson, who was in the prime of life, lived to see the ravages cease, but he was destined to partake in the general distress, and drink deeply of the cup of sorrow; for his loving wife, who would not leave him when his two children were sent away, was, as I have already stated, a victim of the plague.

“There are extant three letters by Mompesson, written during the plague, at the time when his dear wife had been snatched from him, and when he considered his own death inevitable; and in speaking of these Wm. Howitt says: ‘In the whole range of literature, we know of nothing more pathetic than these letters.’ I am sorry that time forbids the reading of them on the present occasion.

“And now I have done: I have not attempted to go into any details of my comprehensive subject—these you will find in the works already referred to; but I have pointed out the principal objects you will like to see, and said enough about the ‘mighty woe’ to excite your interest, I hope, in the subject.

‘The tale is tinged with grief and scath,
 But not in which man’s cruel wrath,
 Like fire of fiendish spirit shows,
 But where through terrors, tears and woes,
 He rises dauntless, pure, refined;
 Not chill’d by self, nor fired by hate,
 Love in his life—and even his fate
 A blessing on his kind.’”

After inspecting the Church, the party walked to Mompesson’s well, and the Riley graves. Tea was taken at the inn, and the return drive made viâ Stoney Middleton to Hassop, in time for the 8.23 train to Derby.

During the past year the Vigilance Committee has not been called upon to take any step to prevent acts of vandalism in the county ; whilst, however, it is hoped that nothing of the kind has been overlooked, we would ask all Members of the Society to be particular always to report to the Hon. Sec., and to urge their friends outside the Society to do the same, in the case of every proposed alteration in, or possible destruction of any sort of ancient building or other relic of the past.

Enquiries have been made with a view to the possible opening of the Mininglow Barrow in this county, and at one time it was hoped that this Society might be able to undertake the work, with the valuable assistance of Sir John Lubbock. Sir John was, however, prevented from coming to Derbyshire this year, and now the Mininglow Barrow is scheduled under the new Ancient Monuments Act, and the decision as to its being opened no longer rests with the Derbyshire Society alone.

The question has frequently been brought before the Council, as to whether a uniform binding for the volumes of the Society's Journal ought not to be adopted. With this idea in view, the Council has ordered the seal of the Society to be cut in brass, so that it may be used by Members as a stamp for a binding in cloth boards. The Council has also ordered one hundred copies of the present issue, Vol. V., to be so bound, and stamped, as specimens, with a view to ascertaining the feeling of the Society generally on this point. These bound copies will be supplied to members who are willing to pay a shilling in addition to their subscription, to cover the cost of binding.

Members will be glad to learn that the preserving process to which the All Saints' wooden effigy has been subjected, has been wonderfully successful: two photographs, showing the effigy before and since the process, are shown you to-day. It is suggested that as the preservation from further decay seems so sure, a complete *restoration* ought to be effected. To do this perfectly, it will be necessary to have certain mutilations made good, involving of course some outlay ; the Council has not thought it right to order this to be done until assured by the authorities at All Saints' that

the restored effigy shall be worthily disposed in the church of which the original of the figure was sub-dean and canon. That such disposal will be effected before our next anniversary the Council feels justified in expecting.

Various papers of interest will be found in this volume of the Journal, but the Natural History side of the Society is not represented; members are asked to recollect that the Publishing Committee is always glad to receive offers of papers for publication upon subjects connected with Archæology or Natural History.

The thanks of the Society are due to Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, for his editing of the Journal for this, as well as for the two past years.

The Council has decided to obtain an accurate return of all the Church Plate in the county, with a view to publishing an illustrated volume upon the subject, as has been very successfully done by other societies similar to our own. It is hoped this scheme will commend itself to our members, and any help from them in obtaining sketches or rubbings of special articles of Church Plate in the county will be very acceptable.

In June last, your Council, in the name of the Society, offered to our President, the Duke of Devonshire, an expression of condolence and sympathy with him in his great domestic sorrow.

We have to regret this year the death of one of our Vice-Presidents, the Rev. Sir Edward Repps Jodrell: seventeen ordinary members have been removed from us by death or other causes, but still we are to-day numerically stronger than at our last anniversary. The accompanying balance-sheet proves us to be in a good position financially, and the Council is satisfied with the result of the Society's fifth year of proceedings.

ARTHUR COX,
Hon. Sec.

Mill Hill, Derby,
January 16th.