

NOTES AND NEWS

Melandra Castle, 1962.

DR. J. A. Petch reports that this year work has been confined to levelling the interior of the fort. In rather less than two days and in spite of a torrential storm the spoil-heaps which have for so long given the fort such an air of desolation were bull-dozed out of existence. The work was financed by a grant from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. It was carried out under constant and close supervision.

Church Plate.

The publication last year of the survey by S. A. Jeavons on the church plate of Derbyshire has aroused considerable interest. Two members, the Reverend R. F. Borough and E. C. Clayton, have contributed the following additional notes on the plate at Hulland and Morton respectively.

The engraving on the 1705 paten at Hulland is of the armorial bearings of the Borough family, who had owned over 1,000 acres there since the reign of Charles II, until it was sold a year or two ago. They built the Old Hall in 1677 and a new one in 1777; they also gave the land for the church, school, churchyard and two later extensions.

The blazon of arms is: *Argent, growing from a mount in base, vert, the trunk of an oaktree, couped, sprouting out two branches, perfect. Hanging thereon, by a belt gules, the shield of Pallas Athenae, or, bearing the head of the Gorgon Medusa.*

The engraving is small, and no doubt the snakes of Medusa's hair were taken for a wreath. The paten may have been a domestic piece, given to serve as such when the church was built in 1838.

At Morton, in addition to the silver chalice and paten, there is a pewter paten of very plain finish, with two lines round the rim and 8½ in. in diameter. It bears the initials "R. S." and a date, 17—, the last two numbers being indecipherable, with a crown and another image, which is badly worn, of either an owl or a man's face. On the back of the paten a faint design can be seen with a magnifying glass of a head with a long tail and the letter "S" enclosed.

Historic Buildings.

The Council has made representations to local authorities and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government about the threatened demolition of Mark-eaton Hall, 19 St. Alkmund's Churchyard, Derby, the Roman hypocaust on Derby School playing field and houses at Cromford, which are part of the industrial community developed there by Sir Richard Arkwright. It is not only Arkwright's mill but also the well-built cottages, the church and school and the Greyhound Hotel which give Cromford a special place in the history of modern industrial society.

In January after gales the greater part of Bradshaw Hall at Eyam fell to the ground. Serious damage to the building was reported in the last volume and with the failure to secure the funds necessary for emergency repairs this loss of a building of considerable historical interest had been feared.

It is apposite to draw attention to the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act, which came into force on 19 July 1962. This empowers County Councils and Rural District Councils to make grants or loans towards the expenses of other persons or bodies in the repair or maintenance of certain kinds of buildings. These are buildings of special architectural or historic interest included on lists prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 and situated within the area or in the vicinity of the area of the contributing Council. Other buildings of similar interest that are not listed may still qualify if they are in the Council's area.

Little Chester.

Members of the Derby Sub Aqua Club searched the bed of the Derwent for a ford opposite the fort and for remains of the bridge shown on William Stukeley's plan of 1721. They confirmed that there was a ford and a bridge of unknown date.

The Society has undertaken to make a grant for further excavations at Little Chester by Dr. Graham Webster, but additional help will be needed from other bodies in Derby if this work is to be done in the near future.

In his first report Dr. Webster indicated some comparisons between Little Chester and the neighbouring sites at Rocester and Wall. The report on his recent excavations at Rocester has now been published in the new *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*, II, 1962.

Wall Paintings in Eyam Church.

The following report by E. Clive Rouse, M.B.E., F.S.A., is printed by permission of the Reverend E. M. Turner, rector of Eyam.

The removal of dirty and decayed Victorian plaster from the walls of the nave of Eyam church late in 1962 revealed extensive remains of painting on underlying layers of plaster on the north, south and west walls. The chancel arch and the stone facing of the east wall above it appear to be Victorian. The north aisle is a 19th century widening of a 13th century aisle, and no original plaster appears to survive. The south aisle likewise was extensively altered and restored in the last century. Some Victorian plaster survives on the east and north walls; and if this is removed or renewed, watch should be kept for an ancient surface beneath, as paintings (indecipherable to the Victorians) are recorded to have been found in this aisle in the last century. The chancel appears to retain no ancient features on its interior wall surfaces.

Details

Three distinct periods of painting were identified. Surprisingly, no evidence of medieval work could be found on the lowest plaster surface.

On the west wall, flanking the tower arch, the three periods are most clear. The earliest scheme, which must probably be placed within the second half of the 16th century, consisted of a series of cartouches bearing the emblems of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, with the name or title above, the quotation from the appropriate verse of Genesis 49, vv. 9-22, giving the wording of Jacob's blessing to each of his children, below, and the identification of the individual verse. Thus, on the south side appear the figures 14, which would refer to ISSACHAR. On the north side is the word JOSEPH in large black-letter characters. The cartouches would presumably have been placed four on each side, and two on each of the east and west walls.

Overlying this, on an intermediate layer of plaster, are remains of a re-painting of the Tribes series on a different level and at a later date, perhaps Jacobean.

On top of this again is part of a third scheme, of which the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, in very elaborate frames, can be identified. It was part of this set which was revealed, with the churchwardens' names and the date 1645, when the west gallery was removed in the last century, as stated in a footnote to William Wood's *History of Eyam*, 7th edition.

Over the tower arch itself are two grey scroll brackets which may well have supported a painted Royal Arms.

The north wall has remains of the two series of Tribes emblems, superimposed. Reading from the west, these are: GAD (the name, in large black-letter script, just below the wall plate), a military banner: ASHER, a covered cup or bowl: NAPHTALI, a running hind. The fourth has largely perished, but traces of the titles remain at different levels. If the later sequence is followed, verse 22 gives Joseph. It is thus clear that the two sets followed a different order, or commenced in a different place.

The south wall is more fragmentary; but commencing at the west, ZEBULON can be identified: the emblem has gone, but would have been a ship: next is JUDAH, with lion. Here considerable parts of the treatment of both series can be found. In the next spandrel there are traces of painting, but insufficient for identification. The easternmost spandrel has perished.

The discovery, or re-discovery, of this set of paintings is of importance. For though very fragmentary, enough remains to be of value, and to supplement other series, like Burton Latimer, and West Walton. The Eyam set is most like the Burton Latimer cycle, attributed by Mr. Edward Croft-Murray, to the late 16th century. Here there are the same elaborate strapwork, foliage and fruit cartouches, with the name on the top and the verse below: but the shield with the symbol is insignificant, and the lettering is all Roman script and not blackletter. The West Walton cartouches are circular and less elaborate, but the emblems are larger. They seem to be standardised, and both agree with those shown on the title-page to the 1611 edition of the Old Testament. Although very incomplete, the series should clean well and show up clearly, after removal of some limewash and plaster still superimposed.