



# SURREY COLLECTIONS.

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## SOME ACCOUNT OF ST. MARY'S, THE PARISH CHURCH OF WIMBLEDON.

BY

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SO much interest has been shown in the work lately finished in St. Mary's, the Parish Church of Wimbledon, resulting in discoveries that throw light on the antiquity of what remains of the church of the Middle Ages, that I have thought a short account of the church might be a useful record of its history.

Though the church has been altered, enlarged, and mostly rebuilt, the eastern part of the building retains some remains of antiquity. What is to be seen above

ground dates from the 15th century, but the foundations and the lower part of the walls seem to be older. From drawings and prints we know

*The village church in 1786.*

that till 1786 the village church of the Middle Ages was still standing. There was a nave with a south aisle covered by a continuous roof, in which were dormers to light the aisle, and there was a south porch of timber bearing the date 1656. On the roof was a wooden belfry with a tolerably lofty spire, apparently covered with lead (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Kenrick, of Wimbledon, for access to many old drawings and prints of the church in his possession.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

On the north side of the nave was a four-light square-headed Perpendicular window, and above it a large dormer in the roof. Eastward was the present chancel, with a two-light window in the north wall, and a three-light east window, both with Perpendicular tracery, now reproduced in Bath stone. In the south wall was a window like that opposite, of which traces were found during the recent work. Beyond was the Cecil Chapel, exactly as it now is, abutting on the eastern part of the chancel.

In 1786 it was resolved to rebuild the body of the church. The chancel, fortunately, could not be touched

without the consent of the Court of Arches, and has therefore escaped. The new building (Fig. 2), of which several drawings and prints exist, was of red brick, and measured about 48 ft. by 44 ft., or rather more, and probably occupied the extent of the old nave and aisle. It had an apse at each end, that to the west carrying a wooden turret and spire covered with copper, that to the east projecting into the chancel, which was thus blocked off from the rest of the church. There were iron columns and an aisle on each side of the nave; the aisles covered with domed ceilings in plaster and containing galleries. An old drawing shows medallions painted on the ceiling, in which were figures of Adam, Noah and the Apostles. The rest of the chancel behind the intrusive apse was formed into two storeys, the lower being the vestry and the upper the pew of Lord Spencer, the lord of the manor.

The pew opened into the church by windows westward above the altar. In 1818 this was removed, the chancel re-opened and furnished with a gallery on each side, and the 15th-century roof was plastered below the rafters. The architect in 1786 is said to have been Holland, who built the present manor house, but Bartlett says the vestry records only mention a Mr. John Johnson as architect and surveyor.<sup>1</sup>

The chancel parted off.

The chancel re-opened.

Chancel re-opened.

Chancel re-opened.

<sup>1</sup> Bartlett's *History of Wimbledon*.

In 1843 the Gothic Revival was in full career. Mr. Holland's or Mr. Johnson's, building could be tolerated no longer, and the present nave, aisles and towers were built from the designs of Messrs. Scott and Moffat. Scott, afterwards better known as Sir Gilbert, was then a young man of 32, working his way upward, and his partnership with Moffat soon came to an end. Their new church is respectable for its date, but monotonous and uninteresting, though the tower and shingled spire are pleasing, especially from a distance. The walls are faced with flint on brickwork, with dressings of Bath stone, which have stood fairly well the test of nearly 80 years. During the recent works at the east end I was surprised to find behind the flint-work the fair brickwork of Mr. Holland's church, into which long nails had been driven to afford a hold for the flint facing. The mouldings of the arches and of the columns are all of plaster, from which I gather that there are iron shafts within, the columns being slender, and having to support galleries as well as the superstructure.

The chancel was restored by the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1860, I believe by their architect Mr. Christian. The two galleries were removed, the rafters of the old roof exposed and simply decorated, the floor was tiled and deal seats were placed on each side. It must have been then, also, that the arch into the Cecil Chapel was made, and that the old chalk traceries of the windows were copied and replaced by Bath stone.

A vestry was built at the same time between the Cecil Chapel and the end of the south nave aisle, covered by a lean-to roof against the south chancel wall. Either then or previously this wall was strangely pulled about, and partly reconstructed with two 9-in. brick walls, leaving a space between. Embedded in it were parts of a 15th-century window resembling that on the north side.

*Rebuilding  
and  
enlargement  
1843.*

*The chancel  
restored  
1860.*

*The vestry.*

This vestry has been pulled down, the area is occupied by the War Memorial Chapel which has just been finished, and a new vestry has been built outside to liberate the Cecil Chapel which had been used as a choir vestry, and has now been cleared out and thrown open.

*The  
Warrior  
Chapel.*

This brings the history of the church to the present date, which is further illustrated by the plan (*see* Plate), on which the several parts of the building are distinguished according to their dates. I now proceed to describe the various points of interest that remain.

At the north-west corner of the chancel is a small door under a shallow porch, with a little two-light window above it, which was blocked by a monument. This has now been removed, and the window is re-opened. The door and doorway are modern, though the masonry of the little window is old, perhaps of the 14th century; but it has been brought from somewhere else, for the inside splay is of brick plastered, and the head is of timber, showing that the opening is modern. In fact, an old drawing shows an outside staircase at this point, leading probably to the gallery, so that there would have been a door where the window now is. The window, however, must have been formed before 1843, for Scott's chancel arch overlaps the inside splay.

*North  
chancel door  
and window  
above it.*

When the vestry of 1843 was pulled down for the late alteration the removal of a corner fireplace revealed a low-side window in the old flint wall of the chancel. It is pointed, and retains the upright stanchion of iron. There is no glass-groove, and a rebate on the outside, which I at first thought was prepared to receive glazing, proves on further examination not to be original, but to have been cut into the chamfer which once ran round the opening. It is widely splayed inside, but the original head is lost, and has been replaced by a flat slab forming the cill of a recess in the wall above, which here consists, as I have already said, of two 9 in. brick walls with a space between. The meaning of this recess is doubtful; it dates probably from 1786, or perhaps 1818.

*Low-side  
window.*



On the north wall of the chancel next the east wall is a good Renaissance monument of marble and alabaster to William Walter, of Thyndon, a place now known as Finedon, in Northamptonshire, who came to live at Wimbledon, where he married Katherine, the heiress of the Lewstons. He died in 1587, and the tomb was erected in pursuance of the will of his widow who survived him only a few months. She directs that she shall be buried near her husband, and that "ther maie be made in the wall therby some suche small monument for us bothe and for our children hereafter, as withe the advise and good likeing of my good worshipfull frend M<sup>r</sup> Deane of Westm<sup>r</sup> shall be thought meete to my executors hereafter to be named." The executors she names were "S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Cecill knight, M<sup>r</sup> Docto<sup>r</sup> Goodman, Deane of Westm<sup>r</sup>, M<sup>r</sup> Lewsey, and M<sup>r</sup> Burden, my olde faiethfull and very good frendes."<sup>1</sup> The Lewstons are commemorated on a small tablet in the same wall. The Walters were a family of distinction; Edmund, a younger brother of William, was Chief Justice of South Wales, and is buried at Ludlow, and his son, Sir John Walter, Chief Baron of the Exchequer, has a tomb at Wolvercot, near Oxford. William's sister Elizabeth, married Robert Bell, of Wimbledon, and their son, another Robert, married Alice Colston, of Ipswich, and, about 1610, built the house now known as Eagle House, in Wimbledon, in which I write these lines.<sup>2</sup>

From an old drawing it appears that the tomb has lost some brattishing right and left of the escutcheon on the top.

The square building on the south side of the eastern part of the chancel was built by Sir Edward Cecil,

Viscount Wimbledon, who died in 1638, as a mortuary chapel for himself and his family. In his will, dated 1637, he desires to be buried "in the Parish church and Mother church in the lo<sup>pp</sup> of Wimbledon, and in the Isle or Chappell of the said

*The Cecil  
Chapel.*

<sup>1</sup> From the *Family of Walter*, 1907, p. 115, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Eagle House was visited by the Surrey Archæological Society in 1891, and is described and illustrated in a paper by me, published in the Society's *Collections* for that year.

church that I builte a purpose for that ende, and by the tombe of that chappelle where my second wife lies ; and to have no valte, but to be deep buried in the earth as may be, for that as my bodie was made of earth soe I desire it to returne to earth againe."<sup>1</sup>

The chapel therefore was built before 1630, the date of the second Lady Wimbledon's death, and as one of the escutcheons in painted glass contains a coronet, it cannot be older than 1626, when Lord Wimbledon was created viscount.

The building is of red brick with stone coigns, the bricks being plastered outside flush with the coigns. The walls are not bonded to those of the chancel, but meet them with a clear joint, and between them was found the rough cast of the outside of the chancel. The tiled roof is hipped to a ridge running back upon the chancel roof. The chapel was lit by six little windows containing heraldic glass, which will be described presently, and by a two-light window of Perpendicular tracery. This Gothic window seems inconsistent with the date of the chapel, and as it is a modern work of Bath stone it naturally suggests an innovation. But a similar window is shown on the drawings of the old village church, and in a print of 1796 ; and as the connection of the Cecils ceased on Lord Wimbledon's death, for the estate was sold immediately, it is scarcely possible that any one would have meddled with the fabric afterwards. We must conclude that it was put there by Lord Wimbledon as a copy of the other chancel window. There are several instances of Gothic work of a date as late as this elsewhere, especially at our Universities. Lincoln's Inn Chapel was built by Inigo Jones in the Gothic style in 1617, and the fan vault over the staircase to the Hall of Christchurch, Oxford, dates from 1630.

The chapel is ceiled with a quadripartite vault in plaster, another example of the influence of Gothic tradition, and an old, very badly drawn representation of the interior shows some semi-circular recesses next the floor on the east,

*Recesses  
in the wall.*

<sup>1</sup> Dalton, *Life of Viscount Wimbledon*, vol. ii, p. 353.



south, and west sides, with semi-domed heads, of which there is no sign at present. But, when cutting through the wall for the arch into the new War Memorial Chapel one of them was exposed, and the others probably exist behind the plastering. The drawing shows some of the armour that now hangs on the wall resting in these niches.

In the middle of the chapel stands the altar-tomb of Lord Wimbledon, which was probably put up by his executors, of whom his son-in-law, Sir Christopher Wray, was one. The concluding passage in the epitaph seems to refer to the wish expressed in his will. Round the bevelled edge of the touchstone slab forming the top is cut this inscription with raised letters :—

HERE RESTETII S<sup>R</sup> EDWARD CECILL KNIGHT LO CECILL &  
 BARON OF PVTNEY VISCOVNT WIMBLEDŌ OF WIMBLEDŌ  
 THIRD SONE OF THO<sup>S</sup> EARLE OF EXET<sup>R</sup> AND DOROTHY  
 NEVILL ONE OF Y<sup>E</sup> COHEYRES OF Y<sup>E</sup> LO NEVILL OF  
 LATIMER & GRANDCHILD OF Y<sup>E</sup> LO TREASUR<sup>R</sup> BURGHLEY.

A convenient instruction, READ THE ABOVE FIRST, is followed on the north and south sides of the tomb by an account of his military services and honours. At the east end we read the conclusion :—

AND AFTER SO MANY TRAVELLS RETVRNED TO THIS  
 PATIENT & HVMBLE MOTHER EARTH FROM WHENCE  
 HE CAME WITH ASSVRED HOPE IN HIS SAVIOVR CHRIST  
 TO RISE AGAINE TO GLORY EVERLASTING.

An inscription on the west end, saying READ THIS LAST, is followed by an account of his two wives, of whom the first, mother of his four daughters, is buried at Utrecht. Above, from the centre of the vault is suspended a Viscount's coronet.

The chapel was probably entered by a door into the chancel, though the present archway is modern. The other three sides were occupied by the niches.

The armour that hangs on the walls consists of two suits. One is a horseman's suit, and no doubt belonged to Lord Wimbledon. It consists of a helmet with vizor and slit above for vision, a front and back corselet, a gorget, a pair of shoulder-pieces and armlets, and a pair of thigh-pieces to cover the legs down to the knees. The other is the equipment of a foot soldier, the suit, I imagine, of the man whom the town was required to furnish and equip for military service. In the churchwarden's accounts of Earl-Soham, in Suffolk, are the following entries relating to such a requisition in 1591:—

Pay <sup>d</sup> for the towne corslit	xxxij <sup>s</sup>
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Pay <sup>d</sup> for a sword and a dagard and a sword girdell for the towne corslit	vij <sup>s</sup> vj <sup>d</sup>
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Pay <sup>d</sup> for a sworde & a dagard	vij <sup>s</sup>
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Alowans for a shefe of arrowes	iiij <sup>s</sup>
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Alowans for a quiver for the shefe of arrowes	iiij <sup>s</sup>
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In 1597. Itm laid out to Robert Drane Constable the 22 <sup>d</sup> of Mar for solyers and armor to Sr Clement Heighm	iiij <sup>li</sup> x <sup>s</sup>
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For proper care of the Cecil Chapel provision was made by the Hon. Dorothy Cecil, Lord Wimbledon's eldest daughter. By an indenture dated March 2, 1650, she charged certain lands in the parish of Putney with a payment of £25 a year in trust to Sir Richard Betenson and others, their heirs and assigns, of which £8 a year, or so much of it as should be sufficient, was to be expended in the repair of her father's tomb and chapel, and the rest to be expended on the poor of Wimbledon in the manner she directed. She desired to be buried in the parish church of Wimbledon near her dear father if she dies within half-a-day's journey of Wimbledon, and to be carried there by night. If she dies at a greater

*Endowment  
of the  
chapel.*

distance, to be buried where she dies. In fact, she died in France in 1652.

The church still contains some interesting ancient glass though mostly in a fragmentary state. The six little

windows of the Cecil Chapel above-mentioned, *The painted glass.* two of which are removed<sup>1</sup> to the new Warrior

Chapel to make way for the new arch between the two chapels, contained the arms of Lord Wimbledon's two wives and his four daughters. Each little window has below it a tablet of firestone recording the person commemorated. Beginning at the north-east corner of the Cecil Chapel the coats and legends are as follows:—

No. 1—

MR JAMES FINES SON & HEYER  
OF THE L<sup>O</sup>: VIC: SAY & HIS  
WIFE FRANCES CECILL

The *dexter* coat, which would have been FIENNES, azure three lions rampant Or, is destroyed, and the space is filled with a jumble of fragments from various windows.

The *sinister* coat is CECIL. Barruly of ten, argent and azure six escutcheons 3, 2 and 1 sable each charged with a lion rampant of the first.

No. 2—

THE LO: FRANCES WILLOUGHBY  
OF PARROM AND HIS WIFE  
ELIZ: CECILL

*Dexter*: WILLOUGHBY, Or fretty azure.

*Sinister*: CECIL, as above.

<sup>1</sup> In removing the stone frame of one of these the back was found to be worked as part of a Jacobean fireplace—an instance of the economy of stone in Surrey.

No. 3—

HIS FIRST WIFE WHO IN THIS  
TOMB IS NAMED

*Dexter*: CECIL, as above.

*Sinister*: NOEL, argent fretty gules, a canton ermine.

No. 4—

HIS SECOND WIFE

*Dexter*: CECIL, as above.

*Sinister*: DRURY of Hawsted, argent on a chief vert, a Tau cross between two mullets Or.

This coat is surmounted by a coronet.

No. 5—

SIR CHRISTOPHER WRAY KNIGHT  
HEYER TO THE DRURYS & HIS  
WIFE ALLBINILL CECILL

*Dexter*: This coat is destroyed. It would have been that of WRAY. Azure on a chief Or three mullets gules.

*Sinister*: CECIL, AS above.

No. 6—

DOROTHEY CECILL VNMARYED  
AS YET

A jumble of old glass from various windows.

These windows had been disarranged and separated from their proper tablets. They have now been put right.

From among the jumble of old glass I have only been able to reconstruct one coat, quarterly per fess indented argent and sable in the first and fourth quarters a bugle horn of the second. Papworth gives a similar coat, but with the horn only in the first quarter, belonging to the names *Forester* or *Northe*.

Of Lord Wimbledon's four daughters, Dorothy, the eldest, "unmarried 'as yet," died a maid after all. The

*Lord Wimbledon's daughter.* other three married into Puritan families. Sir Christopher Wray, who married Albinia,

sat in the Long Parliament for Grimsby, and died 1646. One of their daughters, Albinia, married Richard, son of Sir Richard Betenson, Baronet, who, besides property in Kent, owned an estate in Wimbledon, including the house now known as Eagle House, which he settled on the young couple. Richard Betenson died before his father, and is buried in the Cecil Chapel. Lord Willoughby fought for the Parliament, but turned Royalist after the execution of the King. He was committed to the Tower, where his wife joined him. Frances, the youngest, married the heir of Lord Say and Sele, a prominent Parliamentarian. Their daughter, Hon. Frances Ellis, is buried in the Cecil Chapel.

The two-light south window of the Cecil Chapel contains some interesting glass, brought from elsewhere,

*Other glass in Cecil Chapel.* in the church. The right-hand light has a quatrefoil formerly in the head of the north

chancel window, according to Lysons and Manning and Bray. It represents a knight fully armed, probably St. George. Though no doubt of the 15th century, it has been observed that the armour is in the fashion of the 14th, an anachronism that occurs elsewhere. In the left-hand light is an oval medallion of enamel glass, with the arms of Lord Exeter embodying Winston, Carlyon, Eckington and Walcot, which was once in the east window of the chancel. Two other

medallions of heraldry, which were once like this in the east window, now occupy the two lights of the north chancel window, which were formerly filled with figures of St. John the Baptist and St. Christopher, while in the quatrefoil over them would have been the St. George now in the Cecil Chapel. An old drawing of the chancel shows these three medallions in the east window. One of them I have already described; of the other two one is the coat of Sir Thomas Cecil, created Earl of Exeter in 1605, son of Lord Burghley and father of Lord Wimbledon. He died in 1623, and will be remembered by the story of the scandalous libel of Lady Lake upon the young wife whom he married in his old age, which King James helped to expose by experiment in the long gallery of the Manor House at Wimbledon. Sir Walter Scott, in "*The Fortunes of Nigel*," makes the king remind his audience of "the curious case of my Lady Lake, and how I trimmed them about the story of hearkening behind the arras."<sup>1</sup> The arms, which are much defaced, would have been those of CECIL impaling those of Dorothy NEVILLE, his first wife, daughter and co-heir of John Neville, Lord Latimer. She died in 1608, and is buried with her husband at Westminster.

The other light contains the arms of Sir Thomas Osborne, first Duke of Leeds, who, as Lord Danby, was Minister to Charles II. He succeeded Lord Bristol in the Manor of Wimbledon in 1676, was created Duke of Leeds in 1694, and died in 1712, leaving Wimbledon to trustees, who sold it in 1717 to Sir Theodore Jansen, one of the South Sea directors. He pulled down the splendid Elizabethan Manor House of the Cecils, of which there are plans in John Thorpe's book now in the Soane Museum.

These three oval medallions are prettily painted with floral ornament and cartouche work in enamel colours with very little use of pot metal, and, as generally

<sup>1</sup> The story will be found in the notes to the *Fortunes of Nigel*.



happens, the colour has in places faded or come off. They are also a good deal broken and patched.<sup>1</sup>

The work lately completed consists of the War Memorial or Warrior Chapel above mentioned on the site of the vestry of 1843, which is opened by *New building.* new arches to the chancel, the Cecil Chapel, and the end of the south nave aisle. A screen with an altar fills the arch between the two chapels, and another screen that to the chancel, which also forms part of new chancel stalls. The new vestry on the south side is faced with flint and stone in chequers.

<sup>1</sup> A full account of the glass in Wimbledon church by Mr. T. K. Arnold, with illustrations, will be found in the *Wimbledon Annual* for 1910.