# LIMPSFIELD CHURCH.

By ALFRED HEALES, Esq., F.S.A.

THE earliest record of Limpsfield Church is contained in Domesday Book. It states[1] that Limenesfeld had been held by Herald in the time of King Edward the Confessor, and then belonged to the Abbot of Battle; having apparently been granted by King William the Conqueror, as part of the endowment of the abbey, which he founded as a thank-offering for his victory. After setting forth the extent of land, it proceeds to mention that there was a mill, a fishery, a *church*, and four acres of meadow; that the woodland afforded pannage (*i.e.* mast, or fruit of beech and oak trees) for 150 swine; there were two stone-quarries, three eyries of hawks in the wood, and ten bondmen.

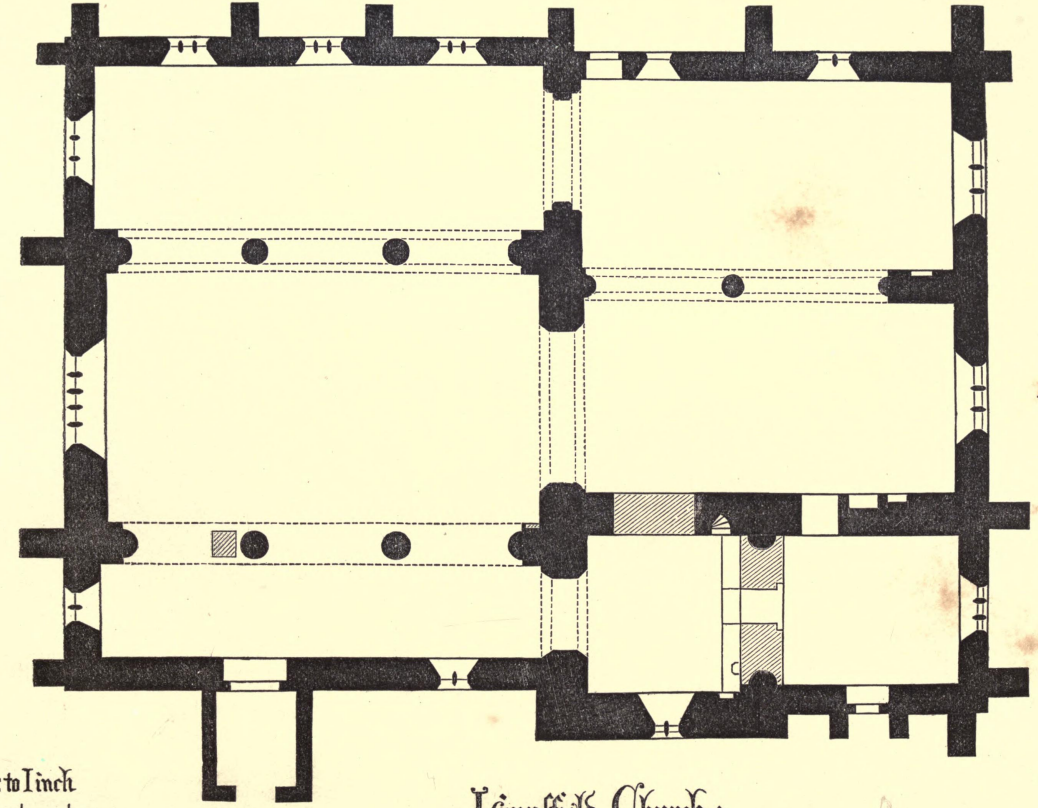
The present unpretending fabric is dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul. It shows no trace of the building mentioned in Domesday, but dates from the period when the Pointed style of architecture was evolved from the Norman, or round-arched style, being in the latter part of the 12th century.

The original plan of the present structure appears to have been a short nave with a narrow aisle on the south side only; a chancel nearly as long as the nave, but narrower; a north chantry adjoining the chancel, which it slightly exceeded in length; and a tower at the east end of the aisle; the whole constructed with walls higher than usual, and apparently strong enough to

[1] Record Office edition, i. 34.

Cowell's Anastatic Press, Ipswich

East end of Limpsfield Church, Surrey.




Scale XVI ft: to 1 inch

Limpsfield Church:

sustain a building of twice its dimensions. Subsequently the entire east side of the tower, in its lower stage, was replaced by an arch opening into a chapel, now superseded by a modern vestry; and that arch was, in the latest Gothic period, built up, in order to convert the ground-floor of the tower into a chapel. Allen and Manning both state the burial-place of the Greshams, to whom the manor was granted in 1537, to have been at the east end of the aisle: if so, they may have made the alteration on that account.[1]

A porch on the south side is of late Perpendicular date. In 1854, the church accommodation was increased by the addition of a north aisle to the nave.

The orientation, or divergence of the long axis of the church from the true east, is 25° to the north.

The interior admeasurements are as follows:—

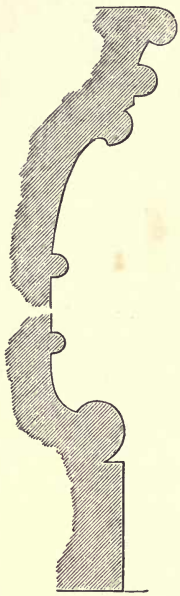
| | ft. | in. | | ft. | in. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nave | 36 | 7 | × | 21 | 1 |
| Arch | 3 | 7 | | | |
| Chancel | 31 | 7 | × | 16 | 2 |
| North aisle | 38 | 9 | × | 14 | 0 |
| South aisle | 37 | 5 | × | 8 | 4 |
| Tower | 14 | 3 | × | 13 | 5 |
| Chantry | 31 | 11 | × | 16 | 10 |
| Vestry | 15 | 7 | × | 12 | 10 |
| Extreme dimensions | 71 | 9 | × | 52 | 0 |

It is clear that, beside the parochial or high altar in the chancel, there were two chapels, and probably a third.

Proceeding to notice the structure in detail, we find between the nave and original, or south aisle, three recessed chamfered arches, resting on massive circular pillars, with well-moulded caps. The present west window in the nave is of five lights, large and new, superseding one of like division, dating from the latest Perpendicular date, foliated, but without tracery. Instead of the former west window of the aisle, which was little

[1] Granville Leveson-Gower, Esq., the present representative of the family, states that their burial-place was the north chantry.

more than a loop, there is now a two-light window with modern stained glass; the south side has but two small Perpendicular windows of two lights, square-headed.



*Cap and base of nave pillar.*

The north arcade has been constructed in a similar style to that on the south, but lighter.

Throughout the church there remains no ancient tracery; but in the chancel are two blocked lancets, and in the chantry chapel is another.

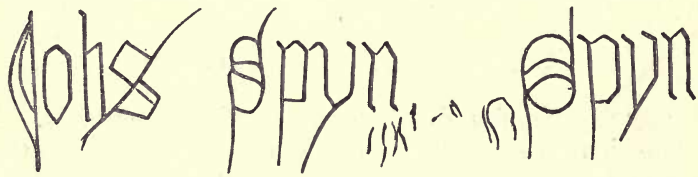
The chancel arch was formerly lower and narrower than it now is; at present it is recessed and chamfered, and sinks into the jambs without any impost.

*Cap of E. nave respond (original base destroyed).*

At one time the tower opened into the church by three arches, all now built up; that on the north, into the chancel, is low, rather narrow, flat-soffited, and resting on plain chamfered imposts; that on the west is recessed and chamfered, the inner order resting on a square abacus running straight through the thickness of the wall, with a boldly undercut Early-English moulding, just beneath which is engraved (or little more than scratched) in characters dating from the 14th century, and quite illegible until recently cleaned, the names "Johs Spyn —Spyn," with a lion sejant between the duplicated name; and the surname is repeated in smaller letters just below (p. 241). The eastern arch, formed still later and occupying the entire width of the tower, rests on brackets: as already mentioned, it was afterwards built up, in order to convert the base of

*Cap and base of W. nave respond.*

the tower into a chapel; and a stone seat runs along it, except in the centre, where the altar was and the present doorway is; higher up is a bracket, and in the south wall is a late piscina. In the north wall of the tower, a doorway at the entrance of a destroyed staircase, probably led, through the thickness of the wall, over the north arch to the rood-loft across the chancel-arch, since the upper rood-doorway is traceable just outside the chancel-arch, and a spiral staircase comes out in the north-west angle of the tower: it does not appear that the staircase was carried higher. The belfry story has on each side a small couplet of round-headed windows, and the whole is capped with a high-pitched pyramidal roof, covered with shingles, and of a type common in Sussex.



The church was "new-pewed and otherwise repaired" in 1713.[1]

There are four bells:—

I. The oldest has the following inscription (with a fleur-de-lis ornament between each word and a coin at the end), in Lombardic letters, rather small and peculiar, and coinciding with the date ascribed by Mr. Tyssen,[2] viz., between 1350 and 1400.

IN MVLTIS ANNIS RESONET CAMPANA IOHANNIS.

Unhappily this important bell is cracked.

[1] Cracklow's *Surrey Churches.*

[2] *Church Bells of Sussex*, by Amherst Daniel-Tyssen, Esq.

II. The next is black-letter with good Lombardic capitals :—

Sancta Margareta Ora Pro Nobis (Coin.) T. H. (Coin.)

The same authority states that the initials indicate Thomas Hillman, a founder at Canterbury between 1350 and 1400 ; probably the latter is about the date of this bell.[1]

III. In bold black-letter with late Lombardic capitals : the date between 1475 and 1525 is assigned to it :—

✠ Sum Rosa Pulsata Mundi Maria Vocata.

IV. Black-letter with very singular capitals, and a heart between each word :—

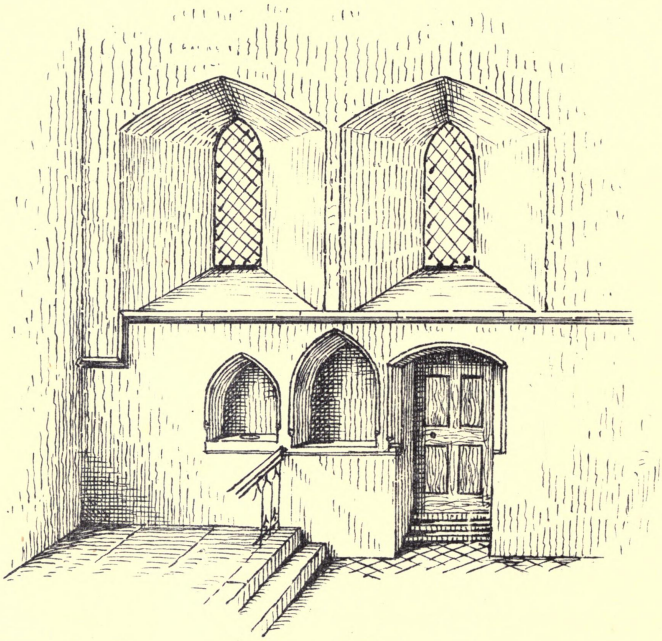
Bryan Eldridge Made Mee. 1619.

He was a great founder of Surrey and Sussex bells.

The inventory of church goods in 1553 mentions four bells in the steeple : no doubt the three oldest remaining are the same, the fourth being re-cast by Bryan Eldridge.

Two good-sized arches on the north of the chancel open to the chantry, which evidently belonged to the founder of the present church, as it is coeval with the chancel ; but it has for a long period been the property of the Gresham family, who were Lords of the Manor and the only family of importance since the beginning of the 16th century. The caps appear to have corresponded with those between the nave and aisle, but the stone has been cut into new mouldings and spoilt. In the chantry is a piscina, now blocked ; on the north side is an obtusely-pointed lancet and a square-headed window of two lights, and that at the east end is of three lights, both the latter being Perpendicular and injured.

[1] There is another specimen of the skill of T. H. at Hampton Court Palace.—*Mr. Tyssen.*



South side of Chancel,
Limpsfield Church, Surrey.

On the south side of the chancel are a large plain piscina, a sedilium for the priest (both with pointed heads), and adjoining is the priest's door, now opening into the vestry, with segmental head: over these there runs a pointed bowtell string, on which rest two widely-splayed lancets, now blocked. (*See* Illustration.)

The bowl of the font is a large square stone hollowed with a circular basin, and stands on a central and four surrounding pillars. This is a very common type at the date of the church, but the present example has evidently undergone, in the Jacobean period, the process which would be now called restoration, and is not without interest on that account, though quite deprived of its original surface. It stands near the south doorway.

The aisle roof is a lean-to; those of the nave and chancel are of fair pitch and coved, but plastered; and judging from the deeply-moulded wall-plate, are of middle Perpendicular date.

Across the west end of the nave is a gallery spoiling the effect of the large window.

Only one ancient monument remains, and that is now but the matrix of a brass existing in the time of Manning and Bray, who describe it as "a chalice, on the top of which is the resemblance of a spread fan;" but the inscription was then missing.[1] The chalice was gone before the date of Brayley's work, in 1841; and we find that the matrix-slab has been moved from the entrance of the chancel to the east end of the south aisle.

On a brass plate in the floor of the north chancel is the following inscription:—

HERE LYETH GEORGE ELYOTT, ESQVIER, AND GROOME OF THE PRIVIE CHAMBER TO Y^E^ QVEENE, AGED 62 YEARES, WHO DYED THE 15^TH^ OF FEBRVARY ANNO DOMINI 1644.

At the west end of the south aisle is a high tomb, on which rests a full-sized effigy in white marble, of John,

[1] Manning and Bray's *History of Surrey*. It perhaps represented the chalice and host with rays of glory from it.

thirteenth Lord Elphinstone, who died in 1860; he was for some time Governor of Madras, afterwards a Lord in Waiting to the Queen, and subsequently Governor of Bombay: the figure is a beautiful specimen of sculpture, and is considered an excellent likeness.

The churchyard is entered by a lych-gate, which, though modern, probably indicates that a previous one existed.

There are two inventories of the church goods in the reign of King Edward VI. One seems to be a report of a jury appointed to investigate the goods belonging to the parish. It enumerates, one chalice of sylver; one velvet and one silk cope; one crimson velvet and one blue satin vestment; one pair of organs; and some great bells. It mentions that John Midhurst and Richard Broke were churchwardens in the first year of the Kinge's Majesty's reign "that now is;" and that there were no goods or other ornaments sold, stolen, or p'eved, since the first inventory; and it is signed by Antonie Hethe and Robert Drencher, sidesmen, and Thomas Stone and John Burton, churchwardens.

The other inventory, dated May, 1553, states that there were delivered into the hands of the Commissioners for the sale of Church Goods, a chalice weighing 13 oz., a cope to make a communion cloth, and four bells in the steeple. It bears the names of the same churchwardens in the margin, and is signed by the latter of them. A note adds that the cope and vestments, and other ornaments sold for xx*s*.[1]

The Parish Register is headed thus:—

> "The Register booke of the pish of Limsfeild of Burialls Christenīgs and Weddings wh have done therein since by law it was first ordayned they showlde be registered. Coppyed out of the ould booke into this, anno Dommini 1600."

The record, commencing with the date 1539, affords confirmatory evidence of the belief that the keeping of

[1] *Vide* pages 58 and 113 of the *Inventory of Church Goods* in this volume.

registers in England was commenced pursuant to the injunction of Lord Cromwell, in the thirtieth year of King Henry VIII., 1538.[1]

The entries are for some time promiscuous, and the following will serve as illustrations of the form used:—

1539. Imp$^{o}$mis the Christeninge of Edward White's Child January 4.
The 26 of January was baptised John Stone the sonne of Thomas Stone.
The 24$^{th}$ of February was Baptised John Coles child named Agnes.
1540. The first of Auguste was wedded Willā Mayster and El Grawall.
The 27 of August was Buryed Thomas the sonne of John Clayton.
The 19 of December was buryed the child of John Hamden, the name William.
1542. The 16 March Christened John the sonne of John Dorant and buried the same day.
1543. The 30 August was buried Edward a Nurse child.

Every year, on the average, records the burial of a nurse-child; and if, as we may fairly suppose, entries such as—

1558. May 18, buried Lucas, a Londoner's child kept by Henry Wells,

to mean the same thing, there would probably be at least three buried every year; a very large number in proportion to the small population of the parish.

1549. Septembr 29, buryed William fuller, souldier.

Some fever or contagious disease occurred, but not generally, in 1549-50. On the 21st February was buried William, the son of Richard Buckland; on the next day, his daughter Katherine; on the 2nd April himself, and on the 8th and 16th, two more of his children.

1555. June 3, buryed Robert Juell w$^{ch}$ did hange him selfe in a howse q$^{d}$ vocatur Chart.

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[1] Burn's *Parish Registers*, p. 5, quoting Prideaux and others.

The Juell family were for a long time one of the most numerous and apparently influential families.

1557. Novemb. 21, marryed William Banister and Agnes *his wife.*

From 1558 to 1562, the three descriptions of entries were assorted, but afterwards the old plan of mixing was renewed, being less trouble; and during that interval the record of marriages gives only the names of the man who was married, and not the woman, and in the christenings the names of the parents were omitted.

1566. March 28, buryed the auld wife at Becket's.
1575. March 12, buryed ould mother Butcher, Widdow.
1616. March the 20, Buried old father Douplex.

The rector died in 1546, and is thus recorded:—

1546. February 27, buryed S^r^ Steven Sythwarren.

Steven Sythwarren or Fitzwaryn, was rector in 1534.[1]

1572. William Danby, parson, of Limsfeild, buried Octob^r^ 4.

He was succeeded by Thomas Bell, who soon after married.

1574. July 8, marryed Thomas Bell, person, of Limsfeild, and Lucrece Johnsō.

The baptism of five of their children in the years 1575, 1577, 1579, 1582, and 1585, succeeded in due course.

1574. May 20, buryed Jone Edwards out of S^t^ Bartholomew's hosp^l^.
1578. July 10, Margaret a beggar child bapt^d^.

Several similar entries occur; as for example:—

1638. Buryed a vagrant young wench named Anne Lowe, of Suttō, Sep^t^ 28.

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[1] Manning and Bray, 398.

From the latter part of the 16th century, the residence is frequently mentioned:—

1589. Aprill 18, buryed Valentine, sonne of John Gyatt, parson, of Farly.
1595. March 26, buryed Jone, wife of Robert Wood de Tytsye, unbaptised.

Several others unbaptized occur about this period.

1587. May 26, buryed John Burton, the Clarcke.
1595. Then buryed (26 Jan.) John Mills senior ye Clarke.
1601. April 3, baptised Richard, a child of a woman Beggar, who said her husband's name, the father of the said child, was John Diggens.
1603. March 26, buryed Richard Swanne, parishe Clarke.
1617. September the 15, Baptised Mary, the daughter of Patrick Balfour, Curat of Limesfeild.
1622. Tho. Downes, Clarke of ys pish, buried the xixth of March.
1623. John Comfort, Clarke of the pish of Titsey, was buried the 14th day of April, in the pish churchyard of Lymsfeild. Ao Dñi 1623.

In 1622 an excellent handwriting commences, apparently that of Mr. Lorkin, the rector.

1629. A chrysome,[1] of Mr. Thomas Greshame, buryed May 29.

In 1625 only do we find records of plague, so stated, but the registers are almost totally deficient for some years about the time of the great plague. The entry of burial of Elizabeth, daughter of John Webster, on 22nd July, 1625, adds "of the plague." Elizabeth his wife was buried on the 6th August, and himself the same day, "in the eveninge and of the plague;" and another person on the 19th. In 1691 is recorded a death from small-pox, and three years later are five together, indicating its contagiousness and virulence.

In 1635, John Cacott was curate, and with the churchwardens, signed his name in the margin; his son Leonard was baptized 27th May, 1641.

[1] Chrysome. See *Transactions* of this Society, vol. ii. p. 85; also *London and Middlesex Archæological Society*, vol. ii. p. 211; and an excellent paper in the *Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, iii. p. 35.

From 24th February, 1654, the entry states that the child was born (not, was baptized), as in this example :—

1655. April, Borne a sonne of Richard Heath named John.

The Heath or Heth family was extensive, and from an early period ; the family pedigree is given by Manning and Bray.[1] One of them was a Justice of the Peace for the county at the time of the Restoration.[2] Their arms were, argent, a cross raguled gules, between twelve billets of the same.

The last date in the first volume of the register is 21st December, 1655, and the next volume begins with this heading :—

1654. The Register booke for the parish of Lympsfield, According to an Act of Parliament Dated the 24 of August, 1653,[3] for regist'ring publication of marriages, birthes, & burialls which shall be or hereafter happen in the same p̄ish.

The marriages are in form like the following, which was the first under the new regime, and the ceremony (?) chances to have taken place on the 1st of April :—

Bateman and Tower. The Intention of marriage betweene John Bateman and Elizabeth Tower, bothe of this parish, being three severall Lord's dayes publish$^{d}$ in the parish Church afforesaid, and then afterwards was the marriage solemnized before a Justice of the peace the first day of April 1654.

The entry often adds "none gainsaying," and is usually attested "p̄ me W$^{m}$. Hilder, y$^{e}$ p̄ish Register;" but the form occasionally runs thus :—

These may certify unto all whome it may concerne that the solemnization of marriage between John Heth and Alice

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[1] Manning and Bray, ii. 290. [2] List of Justices.

[3] Ten years previously, the Directory for Publique Worship had ordered that in every parish or chapelry there should be kept a fair register-book of velim ; and also the publication of purpose of marriage on three several Sabbath days.

> Darknoll, both of them of the parish of Limpsfeild, was pformed before me this 11th of April 1657.
>
> AWDELEY.[1]

Two are signed by John Goodwyn, perhaps the same person who was returned as member of Parliament for Bletchingly 27th January, 1648–9, and 25th April, 1660.[2] There was a rector of the same name in 1517, and one Sir John Goodwin disposed of his share of an estate called Randalls in 1572.

But the year 1659 inaugurates the return to ecclesiastical rites; and an entry on 18th August, in generally similar terms to the last, certifies the solemnization of a marriage in the parish church,

> by me Edward Lorkin, Rector of Limpsfeild.

But perhaps the registrar continued his office under the name of clerk, as the same handwriting continues up to 10th June, 1669.

It would appear that the rector was not dispossessed during the Great Rebellion, for his name as "minister" occurs on several occasions during that period. Numerous entries relate to his family:—

> His son Edward was baptized 15 February, 1620.
>
> Cicely, daughter of Mr. John Lorkin, buried 27 Nov. 1645.[3]
>
> The Rector's son Henry was born 11th July 1655, & buried 10th Oct. 1657.
>
> Richard, son of Marmaduke Lorkin, Citizen of London, was buried 13 Dec. 1658.
>
> Frances, Daughter of the Rector, was born 12 Nov. 1661, & married by licence on 27 Nov. 1686 to Joseph Egerton.
>
> The Rector's son Marmaduke was born 12th May 1662, & baptized on 20th.

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[1] James Touchet (or Tuchet), created Lord Audley and Earl of Castlehaven 3rd June, 1634; Mervin, his father and predecessor, having been in 1631 attainted and beheaded, and the title forfeited. He opposed Cromwell's forces in Ireland, and retired to Paris with the king; but it appears by this register that he returned before the Restoration.—Burke's *Historic Peerage*.

[2] Manning and Bray.

[3] John Lorkin, Curate of Lingfield, was buried there in 1654.

His daughter Mary was born 8th May 1665, baptized 16th, & was buried 11th May, 1700.
A son Edward was born 11th Oct. 1665, & baptized on the 19th.
Thomas born 18 April 1667, bapt. 25th.
Edward Lorkin, Citizen of London, married Mrs Mary Crispe of Lympsfeild in 1686, & he died at London, but was buried here 28th May, 1690.
1687. January ye 22th was buried Edward Lorkin, Minister of this parish, wth Affidavit that he was Buryed in woolen only, according to late Act of Parliament, & dyed at Croydon.

The Act is 18th Charles II., cap. 4, which requires that every corpse should be attired in woollen only, under a penalty of £5. It was re-enacted by 30th Charles II., cap. 3, and repealed as late as 54th George III., cap. 108.

Mary, the Rector's Widow, was buried 15 Decr 1695.

The name Lorkin being peculiar, it may have probably been an ancestor of the family against whom, in 13th Richard II. (1390), an action of trespass was brought (as appears by the Court Rolls of the Manor of Coulsdon) by one Richard Chapelet, for taking away Katherine his wife, with divers goods and chattels to the value of £10, to his (Chapelet's) damage of 100 shillings. He brought another action against the same William Lorkin for detaining a hog, of the value of 3*s.* 4*d.*[2] Perhaps the matter was amicably settled, for there appears no further entry relating to the suit.

From about the year 1661 the register is in a very imperfect state.

In 1675 it became very customary to add a description, such as labourer, tailor, yeoman, lodge-keeper. In 1661 is recorded the birth of Arnold, son of John Foster, *chirurgeon*, and in 1675 is mentioned Mr. Totless, an attorney. In 1629 and 1673 are burials of Chrisoms.

Of the older surnames appearing in the registers scarcely any remain except common names, which may very likely have been reimported,—such as Wood, Heath, Reynolds, Manning; but one of the oldest is "Cronke," which occurs in 1543, and still survives. Of the great

[1] Statutes at Large. [2] Manning and Bray, ii. 448.

Gresham family entries are frequent; but it will suffice here to mention Thomas, of the Chart, in 1676; Edward, of Newhall,[1] 1679; and Leonard, of Morehouse, in 1685. The arms of the family, granted 1537 to Sir Richard Gresham, Lord Mayor of London, are; argent, a chevron ermine between three mullets of five points sable, pierced of the field; on a chief gules, a pelican between two legs of a lion, erased, or, armed gules. Crest, a grasshopper couchant, or, with a tuft of grass, vert, on a wreath, or and gules. Sir Marmaduke and John Gresham were magistrates at the time of the Restoration.[2]

There is little peculiarity in the Christian names; Julian and Gillian, Ursula, Christian, Mercy, and Audery, all occur before 1600. On 20th March, 1700, is a curious combination of names in the record of baptism of a child of "Warham Bloody."

Various residences within the parish are mentioned, from the latter part of the 16th century downwards. In the tract called the Charte, lying to the south-east of the church, were in 1594, John Juell; 1615, Thomas Elliott; 1616, Thomas Stevens; 1622, William Ayre and Edward Butcher; and 1676, old Mr. Thomas Gresham. In the Wilde, or Weald, were, in 1587, Robert Juell; 1590 and 1591, John Juell; 1618, John Dane, &c. At Staukenden, or Stockenden, now Stockington, situate near the centre of the parish, John Homden, or Hamden, resided in 1591; Doggetts, or Doghurst, was the abode of John Heath in 1587 and 1590, and John Melles 1614; at the Gilldables, or Guildables, lived Thomas Fuller in 1620; at Paine's Hill was the widow Heath in 1618; John Juell lived at Stafford's Wood, in the south, in 1592 and 1615, and Thomas Juell in 1618; Bachelors was another residence, situate in the south-eastern part of the parish. These are only some of the earliest dates. All the above localities

[1] Newhall was pulled down some time since. It was situated by the brook near the road leading from Limpsfield to Titsey, and not on the spot where Hookwood was subsequently erected, as stated by Allen (vol. ii.), and by Manning and Bray.—(*Ex relat.* of Mr. Leveson-Gower.)

[2] List of Justices of the Peace at the time of the Restoration.

are situate in the parish, and still known by the same names.[1]

In the next parish, called Oxted, immediately adjoining the churchyard, is a house called the Court Lodge, from whence John Heath was buried in this churchyard in 1590, and Thomas Forman in 1620; and so from a house in Oxted, called the Downe, were burials in 1601 and 1660. There appear, however, very few entries relating to non-parishioners, if we except the burials of Londoners' children, which being of frequent occurrence, indicate that the little strangers received no great care and attention.

Thus much of archæology is afforded by Limpsfield Church and its belongings. A small church, almost devoid of ornament; little known; all but destitute of monuments; unconnected before the 16th century with any known family of note, and since then but one; being, in fact, one of the less important of the thousands of parish churches scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land: it presents no salient features of interest. Still no ancient church which has in the main escaped the ravages of time and destructive agencies can fail to possess some antiquarian points worthy of note,—some facts which an Archæological Society may well place upon record, and hand down to a future age when the structure itself has disappeared.

[1] This may be seen in the Ordnance map.