



The Antiquities of Wallingford.

By John Edward Field, M.A., Vicar of Benson.

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7.—ST. MARY THE MINOR stood in the High Street, upon a site known to Skermer, who says that “Mr. Thompson, a baker,” lived there, and that “the churchyard was Mr. John Goodwin’s back yard”^{*}; but unless these premises could be identified, the names afford no clue at the present time. It has been suggested that we have a portion of this Church existing in the groined crypt or cellar on the south side of High Street, a short distance below the entrance to Wood Street; but this lies north and south, whereas the crypt of a Church would probably be east and west; and it is evident that it is merely a cellar, in which some vaulting-ribs of the 15th century and some Norman corbel-heads, probably from a church, have been re-erected. The site, therefore, of St. Mary the Minor has been regarded as hopelessly lost. But beneath the house which occupies the angle of the south side of High Street and the east side of St. Mary’s Street (the old Fish Street) a large number of human bones have recently been found; and though it does not appear that the bodies had been buried in an orderly manner, yet it may be presumed that in a town possessing ten disused churchyards, as well as four in use, one of these would naturally be chosen if a pit were needed for hasty and irregular interments in time of siege or of pestilence. Now the parish of St. Mary the Minor (with that of St. Michael) was united to St. Peter’s in 1374; and the present parish of St. Peter extends up both sides of the High Street to this point, and also extends along both sides of Fish Street as far as the White Hart entry, taking in only a narrow section of the block of buildings on the west of that street. We may fairly infer that this was the old parish of St. Mary-the-Minor, and that the spot where the bones have been disinterred was part of its burial ground. Since there would be no burials on the north side, the Church would probably stand against the High

^{*} Hedges’ History of Wallingford, II., 412.

Street, as stated by Skermer, with its churchyard on the west and south beside Fish Street. Further, this churchyard was occupied by stalls for merchandise in the thirteenth century, and the Church is called *St. Mary-de-Stalles* in documents of that period,* while such stalls are not known to have existed in any other of the churchyards; from which we may infer that this was in a favourable position for such occupation, as would certainly be the case on the first thoroughfare from the High Street to the Market Place. The stalls, encroaching upon the roadway, would by degrees become permanent, giving place eventually to shops, and in course of time resulting in a street of exceptional narrowness. Finally, we have a deed of 20 Edw. 1, describing a tenement "situate 'in the smaller parish of the blessed Mary of Walyngeford,' and extending from the street where the fish-market stands."† We may presume that this is the Fish Street of recent times; and the document therefore seems to fix the position of the Church beyond question.

8.—*ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH* stood on the west side of *St. Martin's Street*. Skermer says that it was "upon the garden ground between 'The Black Boy' and 'The Lamb,' formerly called 'The Bell'"; adding that "a great quantity of bones, lying in order in tombs made in the ground with stones and mortar," and "also foundations of the Church," were discovered here in 1712.‡ The mention of "The Lamb" indicates that the Church was near the end of *St. Martin's Street*, not far from the High Street. A short distance south of this point, in the garden behind the house which was lately the Post Office, the remains of burials have frequently been found, and there is a small but ancient yew-tree. The Church, therefore, seems to have stood on the south west of the central crossing of the town, as *St. Mary the Minor* stood on the south east. The Institutions of Rectors are recorded from the close of the 13th century down to 1386. It was perhaps not long after this that the parish was united with *St. Mary's*. The dedication to *St. Martin* was a favourite one in very early times. The Saint was Bishop of Tours, and died in 401. Very shortly afterwards *St. Nynias* dedicated in his honour the Church which he founded at *Whitherne*, in *Galloway*.§ A still more famous instance is that at *Canterbury*, the earliest sanctuary of the English Church in the

* Hedges' *History of Wallingford*, I., 345, 346.

† *Ibid.*, I., 365.

‡ *Ibid.*, II., 414.

§ Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, III., iv.

south of England, dedicated by St. Augustine* soon after his arrival in 597. At Oxford also the earliest of the parish Churches, certainly older than Cnut's day,† is St. Martin's at Carfax, situated, like this at Wallingford, at the central crossing. The apsidal building of which the foundations have recently been uncovered at Silchester, and which is thought with good reason to be the Church, stands in a similar situation. Perhaps, therefore, when the dedication and the position of St. Martin's are taken into consideration together, it has a higher claim than St. Mary-the-More to be regarded as the primitive Church of Wallingford.

9.—ST. PETER-IN-THE-WEST stood in the "corner of the Kenny, now called Kine Croft," says Skermer; and he adds "over against Stone Hall."‡ This leaves it doubtful whether the north-eastern or the north-western corner is meant; but it was probably the latter, just within the west gate of the town, where the pathway enters the Kine-croft, and the ground does not seem to have been excavated. The hostelry with the sign of "The Cross Keys," on the opposite side of the way and just outside the gate, preserves the memory of the Church. But no records of it appear to exist. The dedication of a Church at the gate of a town to St. Peter was a frequent custom, no doubt in allusion to the Keys. It is interesting to note that alike at Oxford and at Wallingford we find a Church of St. Peter both at the east gate and at the west gate; and at Oxford it may be presumed that Robert D'Oilgi, who built the Castle, was the founder of the Church of St. Peter-le-Bailey within it, while there is reason to believe that he was also the builder of St. Peter-in-the-East§; whence we may fairly conjecture that at Wallingford also, as he built the Castle, he may very probably have founded these two Churches of St. Peter.

10.—ST. RUMBOLD'S, otherwise called ST. RUALD'S, is the only Church of the fourteen of which the position has been entirely forgotten. Skermer knew it; but his statement that it was "in a plot of ground now let to Mr. Westall," and that the churchyard is "now let to Mr. Riggins, the minister of Wallingford,"|| does not help us. The tradition of its existence is corroborated by the records of the institutions of five Rectors from 1306 to 1352. It may be noted

* Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, I., xxvi.

† Green, *Conquest of England*, p. 438.

‡ Hedges' *History of Wallingford*, II., 416.

§ Parker, *Early History of Oxford*, 250, 286.

|| Hedges' *History of Wallingford*, II., 416.

that Churches stood just within the east and the west gates, and another was a short distance from the north gate ; so that we might expect to find one similarly adjacent to the south gate. And Mr. Hedges tells us* that in 1877 numerous skeletons were discovered "just within the outer entrenchment, in the ground on the south of Goldsmiths' Lane, upon which the newly-erected foundry of Messrs. Wilder now stands." If, as we have already seen reason to suppose, the south gate was in the line of the north gate and St. Martin's Street and Lovers' Lane, the spot thus described would be close beside it. One burial was evidently of a person of some importance, for the skeleton (says Mr. Hedges) "was protected by rough stone slabs, placed edgewise on either side ; and near it was a piece of stone about twelve inches wide, which was hollowed in the centre as if to receive the head." Such an interment would scarcely take place apart from a Church, and would probably be within its walls. The skeletons were all of large size, and apparently of males only, and with the exception of this one were not lying in any order ; while one was much contorted, as if the man had died in agony ; from all of which Mr. Hedges infers that probably they were soldiers who had fallen in battle, an inference which is strengthened by their propinquity to the gate. It has been suggested above that one of the churchyards would almost certainly be chosen for such irregular burials. There are, moreover, existing documents which indicate the position of St. Ruald's parish. It included St. John's Hospital (presently to be noticed), which was immediately outside the south gate ; for a deed of 10 Edward I. refers to a "messuage on the south side of the burial ground of the Hospital of St. John in the parish of St. Ruald" ; and another, fourteen years later, grants "a house and curtilage situate in the parish of St. Ruald in Walengeford without the south gate."† From all these facts we may perhaps infer that the Church stood within the gate, and that a district outside was assigned as part of its parish, either originally or when the town outgrew its southern boundary. The dedication of this Church is of considerable interest ; for St. Rumbold, or Rombald, was a grandson of Penda, and died in the 7th century, being buried at Buckingham, where the Church is dedicated to him. Such a dedication at Wallingford probably points to the close of the 8th century, when this part of Berkshire was absorbed in the Mercian Kingdom ;

* Hedges' History of Wallingford, II., 417.

† Ibid, I., 365, 367.

and we must infer that St. Rumbold's was the Church of the southern portion of the town before St. Leonard's was erected for the increasing population brought by the Normans to the riverside. There are therefore two, if not three, of the fourteen Churches of Wallingford which may be reasonably assigned to a period anterior to the great development of the town under the Normans. The two are St. Martin's and St. Rumbold's, the third being St. Mary-the-More. The Domesday Survey mentions only one Church, which belonged to the Bishop of Salisbury by right of his lordship of Sonning ; but it is not necessary to conclude that this was the only Church in the town.

(To be continued.)

Early Berkshire Wills, from the P.C.C., ante 1558.

(Continued from Vol. III., page 48.)

32.

The Will of JOHN AUDELET of Barton beside Abyndon, co. Barck, Esq.—4 Oct. 1533. To be buried before Our Ladie of Pety in the new chapell within the Conventuall church of our Blessed ladie in Abindon. To Maister Riche, vicar of St. Elyns in Abindon, to Maister Marble, vicar of the pishe church of Offington, and to other churches sundry bequests. To my servants Cecilye Comyshe and Johan Adean, to Edward Hynderling my wife's kinsman, to William Warner my servant, to Katheryn Read, sundry bequests. To William Boller my kinsman oder the ferme that I have of my lorde Abbot of Malmesbury, or else the ferme that I have of Maister Profest of Eton. Kateryn my wiff and Sir Thomas Yngilfeld, knight, executors. To wife Katherine and her heirs my manor and lands in Henbery and Salte march, co. Glouc., and also my manors and lands in Ipsden Basset and Ipsden Undercombe in co. Oxon. Witnesses, George Owey, docter of phesicke, and Thomas Read.

Proved 27 March, 1537, by Katherine the relict and executrix.
(3, Dyngeley.)