

WARFIELD CHURCH AND PARISH.

BY G. J. P. CAINES.

UNDERTAKEN at a very short notice, I submit a few facts relating to this very interesting Church and Parish to our Society with great diffidence, and ask your indulgence for the hasty and imperfect way in which they have been collated.

The architect, Mr. Street, who has so well restored this beautiful specimen of the ecclesiastical edifices of this county, has kindly forwarded to the vicar a paper describing the architectural features of the church which will be read to you. I therefore will confine myself to more historical and domestic matters connected with the subject.

Within the last few days, by the opening of a fine old iron chest, a considerable quantity of muniments of title, relating to various charities, and books of accounts have been brought to light; but the examination of them has been quite impossible. In passing, however, I must remark that the visit of the Society has been the direct cause on the part of the vicar and churchwardens of this chest being opened after being closed for, I understand, at least some twenty years, and this fact, I venture to say, shows the great advantage and usefulness of such societies as that of the Berks Archæological Society in calling attention to the buried, and alas, too often mouldering mass of most interesting and valuable knowledge of the past, which properly directed should be and is a very important part in the education of the future.

“Instructed by the antiquary times,
He must, he is, he cannot but be wise.”

The parish of Warfield contains about 4,500 acres and is nearly twelve miles in circumference. In Rocque's map the whole of the parish is included in the circuit of Windsor Forest. In Domesday it is stated to be in Ripplesmere Hundred, but is now and would appear to have been in first Richard I. in the Hundred of Wargrave.

In Domesday it thus appears:—

“The king holds Warwelt in demesne, Queen Eddig held it. Then, and now, it defends itself for ten hides (1000 acres) of land. There are fourteen villains with eight ploughs. A wood for one hundred hogs.”

“In the time of King Edward and afterwards it was worth twelve pounds—now six pounds.”

It appears by a passage in Brompton that the manor of Wargrave included Warfield and Lawrence Waltham. These manors were given, together with the whole Hundred of Wargrave, by Queen

Emma, mother of King Edward the Confessor, to the See of Winchester. The grant would seem to have been resumed by her son, who began his reign by seizing on the treasures of Queen Emma, and revoking grants which had been made in the late reign, and as we have seen by the description in Domesday, these manors are stated to be of the king's demesne, and to have been settled by King Edward on his Queen Edgitha. These manors were purchased of Richard I. in the first year of his reign, 1189, by Godfrey de Lucy, bishop of Winchester, and by him again annexed to the See. Bishop Poynt, in 1551, fourth Edward VI., surrendered them to the king, who bestowed them on Sir Henry Neville, one of the gentlemen of his privy chamber. The grant was annulled by Queen Mary, who bestowed it on the See of Winchester, of which John White was then bishop. By an Act of Parliament in the first year of Queen Elizabeth, the grant of Mary was annulled and that of Edward confirmed. The manors subsequently descended to Sir Henry Neville, a distinguished person in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., and who was a sufferer from his adherence to the Earl of Essex. Henry Neville, the last heir male of this branch of the Neville family who had assumed the name of Grey as heir to his maternal grandfather, Lord Grey of Werke, died *sine prole* in 1740, and was succeeded by Richard Aldworth of Stanlake, in the County of Oxford, whose father had married the sister of the last-named Henry Neville. Mr. Aldworth, on his accession to the property, took the name of Neville, and was father of the second Lord Braybrook, grandfather of Lord Braybrook, the present holder.

The manors parcel of the Hundred of Wargrave, possessed extensive privileges under Royal grants to the bishops of Winchester, such as free chase and warren exemption from forest laws and from expedition of dogs (the latter being a practice of cutting out the ball of the foot and so prevent them hunting in the king's forests), etc.

The Church of Warfield is dedicated to SS. Michael and All Angels: a very favourite dedication in England in the Middle Ages, and some six hundred churches still retain it.

The Rectory, which had been appropriated to the Priory of Hurley, was in 1547, first Edward VI., granted to Richard Cecil, whose son William was Secretary of State to that king, and who managed under the rule of Mary, although a zealous reformer previously, like the famous Vicar of Bray, to retain his position, and became *the* Lord Burghley. In 1557 we find Humphrey Harte, whose descendant of the same name appears in the parish registers, died seized of it. Soon after it became the property of the Terry family, in whom it has since continued.

The Vicarage appears to have been in the patronage of the abbots of Reading, and they received from it eighteen marks beside eighteen shillings in lieu of tithes. The ancient value of the vicarage is stated to be £13 6s. 8d. The patronage of the vicarage was in 1813 in

the Terry family, but at a subsequent period became the property of a former vicar, Mr. Faithful. In 1783 Warfield belonged to the diocese of Salisbury, but is now in that of Oxford.

The remains of ancient stained glass in the East window of the chancel, and notably the heraldic shield in the middle window of the South side of the chancel, which has in its first and fourth quarterings the fleur de lis, and second and third the three lions of Edward III., would seem to be coeval with the erection of the chancel, giving the date at about 1337. This date is that of the building of Shottesbrook Church by Sir William Trussel, and the East windows of the chancels of both these churches are very similar in their ramifications. The bells, which are five in number, appear to have been either new or re-cast in the beginning of the last century.

The registers of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials commence in 1599. The former registers would appear to have been burnt in a fire that took place, when the vicarage was entirely burnt down, some twenty-five years since. That commencing in 1599, forty-first year of Elizabeth, and ending 1685, the last year of Charles II., was evidently recovered from this fire, and the outside margins of the parchment leaves are much calcined, and consequently the entries are difficult to decipher. The earlier entries are written in Latin in this book. There was formerly a burial place on Wick Hill in this parish for Papists, and entries appear of members of the family of Milton as being buried there. A woman called Collins was the last buried there, some forty years since. In 1730 was buried one Widow Eustage Burrod, in the 104th year of her age, and in 1762 John Walden, aged 100 years; and these are, I believe, the only entries having the age stated. Under the date 22nd January, 1760, is the entry of the baptism of Thomas Green, Anne Elding, and Sampson Battyn (three adult Negroes converted to Christianity). In 1734 Ellen Hipwood, widow, is stated as buried in "linnen," and other entries that an affidavit was brought or not, as then required by Act of Parliament. In an entry at the end of the marriages, in the register ending 1753, is a list of the persons who subscribed and contributed their charity towards ceiling the church. In A.D. 1760, William Mackworth Pread gave £6 6s. 0d. for two bayes, one being his gallery; the Honourable Mrs. Hewer £3 3s. 0d.; the total amount being £33 4s. 0d. The latter-named lady lived at Warfield Grove, and was noted for driving about in a coach with six horses.

The earliest churchwardens' accounts commence in 1585, twenty-seventh Elizabeth, and contain many items of interest as to payments made for various repairs to the church, windows, bells; moneys paid to poor persons travelling and in great distress, or through fires, etc.; and payments to the ringers for ringing on days of thanksgiving, coronations, and other occasions. For example:—In 1652, "Item for setting up the States Armes, £0 14s. 0d.," and in 1660, "For King's Armes, 12s. 6d." In 1660, "Given the Ringers on Coronation-day, 5s. 0d." In 1673, "For charges about ye excommunicated person into the church, 5s. 0d." In 1690, "Given the Ringers at ye

return of King William out of Ireland, 5s. 0d." In 1697, "For ringing when the King came home." During the time of the Commonwealth the services of the church would seem to have continued as before, if we may judge from the yearly payments of bread and wine for the communion at all the principal church festivals. Under date 1717, the churchwardens' account book contains a "list of the inhabitants of Warfield;" one hundred and nineteen names only, however, appear, and probably these were householders.

The ancient family of the Stavertons, whose burial place is in the chapel, north of the chancel, had an estate in this parish. Their seat (now, says Lysons, a farm-house) was called Healy or Heatly Hall. This farm-house is situated south-east of the Church, and is called Hayley Green Farm. The house and garden are surrounded by a moat.

The heiress of this family, Elizabeth, who was baptised here 10th May, 1626, married Henry Neville, the Republican writer, author of *Plato Redivivus*, and other political works. He, after the Restoration, retired here, and died in 1694, and was buried in the Staverton Chapel. There is, however, no entry of his burial in the register of that date. His wife was buried here April 11th, 1687. He bequeathed the estate to Henry Neville, who assumed the surname of Grey, as we have before seen, and died without issue.

There were formerly several brasses on the stones, in memory of several of the Stavertons, but all but one or two have disappeared, since Ashmole collected copies of the inscriptions previous to 1723. Ashmole gives the following inscriptions amongst others, some of which are yet to be seen.

Upon a plate of brass are the figures of a woman and four sons behind her, with this inscription:—"Elizabeth, Dau^r of Humfry Staverton, and five years the trew and faithfull Wife of John Reade, Gent., was under this stone buried the 3rd of April, 1587, the 25th year of her age, whose verteous Lyfe did shew her Soule's rest with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in joy without ending."

On another brass are, says Ashmole, the figures of a woman, and behind her two sons and nine daughters; under them this inscription:—"Lettice, the dau^r of William Lovelace, Gentleman, and 30 years the trew and faithfull Wife of Humfrie Staverton, was under this stone buried 22 of April, 1587, the 51st year of her age."

On another brass on a stone in the chapel was the figure of a man in a gown, with the inscription:—"Here lyeth Humfry Staverton, 3rd Son of Richard Staverton, of Warfield, Esquire, who deceased the 6 of August, 1592."

Richard Staverton, and Elizabeth, his wife (who was the daughter of Edward Butler, five times Mayor of Reading, and is buried in S. Laurence's Church there), are also buried in the chapel. He died 10th June, 1617; she the 4th February, 1632. Directly over is the monu-

ment on the East wall, for the said Richard Staverton and his wife, both kneeling before a desk. Behind him three sons ; behind her three daughters, all kneeling. Near here is also a gravestone, with these verses :—

“ Under this Stone lyeth, now wrapt in lead,
The corps of Edward Staverton, Esq., dead ;
The last heire male of all his antient race,
Whose Brother's Dau^r. now succeeds his Place.
July the 27th, that day he dyed ;
August the 12th, His bodie here was laid,
In the yeare one thousand, Six hundred, thirty nyne,
Waiting to meet Christ Jhesus at hys tyme.
His love to the Poore, his good almes doth declare—
Twice twenty shillings yearly to their share
He freely gave, for ever to remaine,
Till that by Christ his Body rise againe.
His Father, Mother, Brothers, Sisters, all.
Their Pourtraitures are extant on the wall.”

The monument on the East wall of a man and woman kneeling at a desk, and the figure of a daughter kneeling behind the woman, is referred to by another gravestone, with the inscription :—“ Here lyes, expecting the Resurrection, Richard Staverton, 2nd son of Richard Staverton, who deceased the 6th, and was buried the 8th of October, 1636, and left behind him Elizabeth his Wife, and Elizabeth his only Child, now the Wife of Henry Neville.* The Effigies of which there standeth above in the Stone on the East wall.”

Partly under the organ on a stone is the inscription in Latin—“ In memory of Philip, son of Sir John Thorowgood, and Elizabeth his wife, formerly relict of Sir Henry Neville.”

John and Mary Vachell, of the ancient families of Vachell and Vincent, are buried near the altar in the chancel ; also Sir Arnold Herbert, Knight, and his wife—their tombstones have, however, been destroyed.

* This Richard Staverton, and Elizabeth his only child, are the brother and daughter referred to in the foregoing lines.

