



Discovery of Mural Paintings at Ashampstead Church, Berks.

THE great severity of the Winter of 1894-5 caused such injury to the roof of Ashampstead Church that in May, 1895, one Sunday morning towards the close of morning service, a large portion of the ceiling under the collar-beams, near the font, fell down. Happily, no one was injured, but the Vicar at once set to work to raise the requisite funds for the much-needed repairs, which were commenced in August, 1895.



Fig. 1.

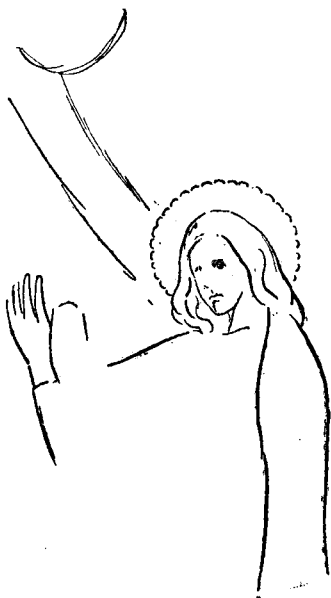


Fig. 2.

The Vicar believed that under the many coats of white and yellow wash on the walls there were to be found both texts and paintings, and he began himself to carefully examine and scrape, and the very first day he found, hidden under coats of wash, Eccles. V. 2, on wall over the old North door in Nave; and, further eastward on same wall, he found the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments, and on the South wall, Malachi II. 7, in black letters and red border; and over modern South door, Gen. XXVIII. 17, over another text, and in black letters within a light blue border. The Churchwardens' accounts for A.D. 1725, contain an entry thus:

"Pd. the paynter for drawing the sentences in the Church £2 10s." Towards the end of the Lord's Prayer, and underneath it and the Commandments, he brought to light, after very careful scraping, an ornamental border running along the North wall of Nave, as in Fig. 1. This bordering was at the top of paintings (Figs. 2, 3, 4

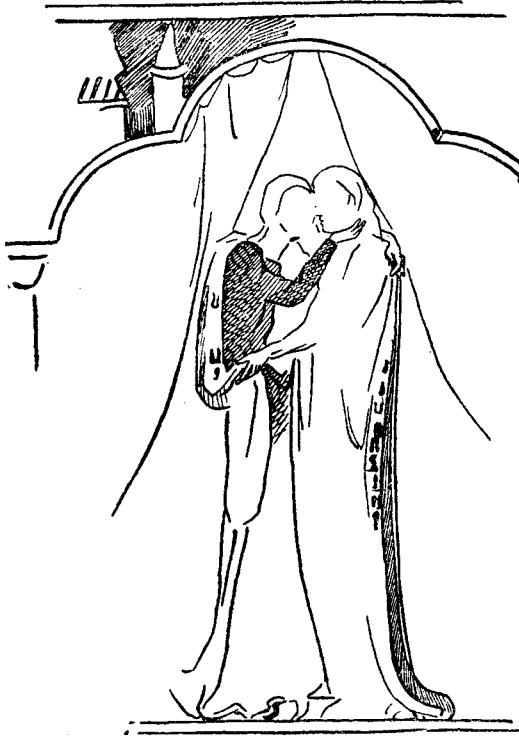


Fig. 3.

and 5) depicting the Annunciation (2), The Visitation (3), The Nativity (4), and the Angelic Message to the Shepherds (5), and a further fragment he has since revealed eastward of these. Over the Chancel entrance he discovered what seems (6) to be either a sunflower (emblem of the Plantagenets, who had property in the parish) or a glorified Rose, or an Aureole, and which has therein indistinct lettering at top and at lower part the words "Jesus God." In the Chancel on North side he discovered much ornamental painting, as in fig. 7, and also the Consecration Cross, and under fig. 5, over Chancel entrance beam, a much mutilated representation of the

Crucifixion, with figures of B.V.M. to right and St. John to the right of the Cross. This painting has also several compartments.

Fig. 2, depicting the *Annunciation*, contains the Virgin being overshadowed by the Holy Ghost as a Dove. She, like one of the "Orantes" in the Catacombs, stands reverently with extended hands, face youthful and very beautiful, and a little injured eye, brown in colour, hair falling in short yellow curls.

Visitation (3). The two figures of B.V.M. and S. Elizabeth are plainly discernible in a curtained doorway. The Virgin's robe is pale yellow. S. Elizabeth's under-robe Indian red in colour with a cloak of pale yellow and blue border. Background golden ochre.

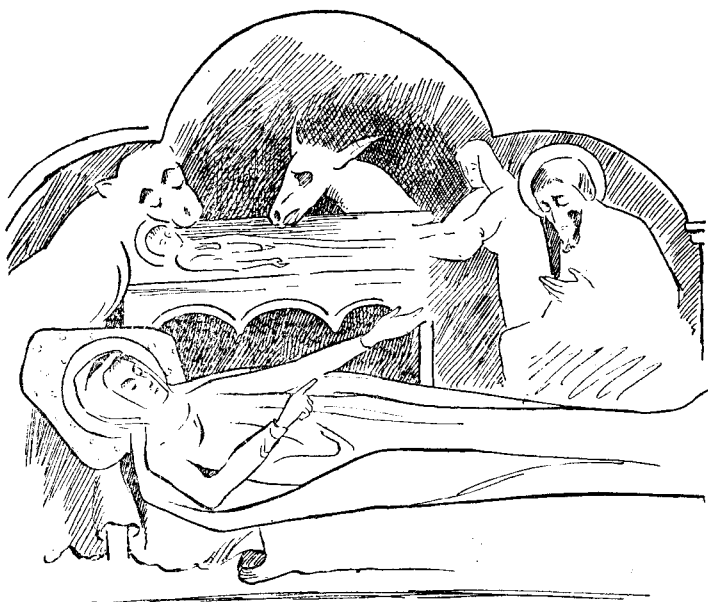


Fig. 4.

NATIVITY (4). The B.V.M. is in a recumbent position on a couch, and this is not usual in a later period than the Byzantine, critics say. Her head with a "nimbus" rests on a cushion. At her feet S. Joseph and an angel, in a deferential position. The Divine Infant lies to her left on an altar table, the head of an ox and an ass being close by. The B.V.M.'s dress yellow, mauve cloak, and blue halo, background dry red.

ANGEL AND SHEPHERDS (5). Angel's right hand stretched out and in other a scroll. Three shepherds, one with right hand to his eyes to shield off the light, the second with right hand over his mouth, the third resting. Yellow background. Angels under-dress Indian red, skirt mauve. Shepherds' dress red.



FIG. 5.

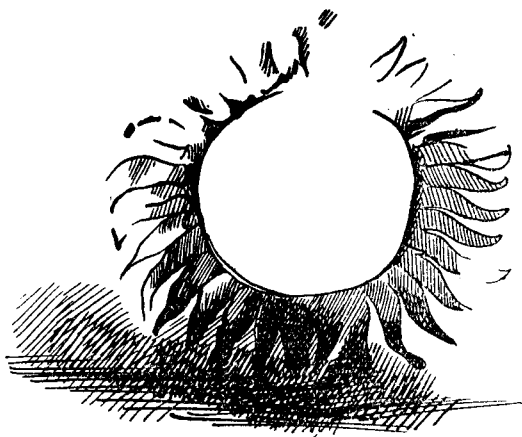


FIG. 6.

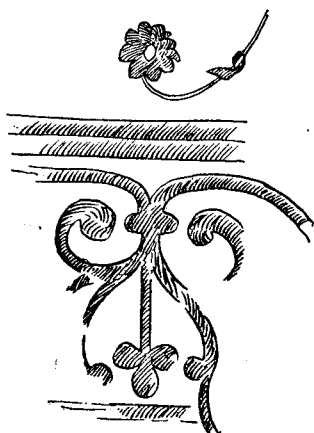


Fig. 7.

These paintings, and the further fragments of same series, are conjectured to be early 13th century work, and the supposed date of the church is 1160-1180. The Vicar is pursuing his researches in the intervals of parochial work, and wishes to have these mural paintings protected from the vicissitudes of our English climate by glass, and will be glad to receive subscriptions for this purpose, for the living is not £50 a year. He will gladly shew them on Saturdays, or other days by arrangement.

These discoveries are not merely of parochial but of general interest.

V. H. MOYLE,

Vicar of Ashampstead.

March, 1896.

Early Berkshire Deeds relating to Grazeley, Berks.

ON a recent visit of the Oxfordshire Archæological Society to Stanton Harcourt, a collection of curiosities of various kinds, preserved at the Manor House Farm, was kindly exhibited by the tenant, Mr. Arnatt. Amongst them are the following three deeds, of the beginning of the 13th century, relating to Lambwood, now called Grazeley, which will, doubtless, be of interest to Berkshire antiquaries.

W. D. MACRAY.

Sciant presentes et futuri quod ego Radulfus Kibe filius et heres Roberti Kibe, remisi et quietum, clamavi pro me et heredibus meis imperpetuum Waltero Remund et heredibus suis vel suis assig-