



## Notes on the Churches of Boxford, Abington, Ashbury, Affington and Longcot.

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Read before the Berkshire Archæological Society, February 22nd, 1910.

*(Continued from page 8.)*

THE nave of Avington Church is severely plain. The roofs are underdrawn, but two of the old beams still remain. There is also a beam above the chancel arch with a plastered recess suggestive of a former representation of the Doom. On the north side near the east end is a plain chamfered Early English arch opening to the modern vestry. Some traces of colouring are still discernible on the chamfered edge. The north window of the vestry is a plain lancet, no doubt removed to its present position, those on the east and west being plain Norman imitations. Here are preserved the four voussours of the old chancel groining, which have already been referred to.

In the nave are two plain windows on north, one in the south and one (new) at the west, all of the same Norman type as those in the Chancel. In the south wall of the nave near the east end is a plain segmental arched piscina with square basin probably of thirteenth century date. At the west end some of the timber-work supporting a former bellcote still remains. The arch of a doorway of thirteenth century date remains blocked up in the north wall. Within it has been inserted a flat stone with a small plain cross on a calvary of three steps incised on it. There is also lying loose on the floor an early stoup with plain round bowl on a shaft with interlaced work carved on it of Saxon character, and part of another stone with some indistinct sculpture, perhaps a seated figure, on it. Close to this arch is the very remarkable Norman or perhaps Saxon font. (Fig. 9). It is tub shaped, 27 inches in height by 80 inches in circumference, and stands on a plain circular plinth. It is composed

AVINGTON CHURCH.



Fig. 9.

THE FONT.

of a hard white freestone, and has suffered from neglect and the hand of time. Round the upper verge is a band of cable, then comes an arcade of eleven semi-circular headed arches on shafts, enclosing figures, and then a double band below and a series of raised scallops or semi-circles round the base. The arches are plain and rest on plain shafts, with large capitals ornamented with the early scroll pattern. Within the arches are two pairs of, and nine single, figures. Many of these are very elaborately vested, but the proportions are in some instances grotesque, and the scheme of the carving is very obscure. It is only possible to conjecture an interpretation of some of the subjects. It is illustrated in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*, and details are shown there, which it is difficult to decipher now. It is probable that some connected subject is intended to be portrayed, but there does not seem to be any clue for unravelling it. The figures are very rudely, though elaborately, carved. The legs are much too short and out of proportion to the rest of the bodies, and the costume is very curious and puzzling, especially in its representation of the nether garments, seven of the figures appearing to be wearing trousers or some kind of divided skirt, just showing the feet below. On the west side is a Bishop or Abbot, bareheaded, with chasuble, and the curious divided lower garment. He is seated and holds a pastoral staff with the head turned inwards in the left hand, and is leaning and looking towards the next figure (2) on south. The upper part of this figure is not clear, and it is uncertain if it is a male or female. The hands are upraised at the waist, and between them on the lap is a head. The skirt is divided, with bare feet below. Can this be intended for St. Denis? (3) is curiously attired, with the trousers and feet just showing below. He has something round the head, and holds in both hands, what in Lyson's is represented as a sceptre, but what looks more like a key, and if this is so, then this is a portraiture of St. Peter. (4) is a figure with tonsure and nether garments similar to those of (1) and (3). Lysons shows him with the pallium, and Mr. James claims him to be an archbishop. He has both hands upraised at the side in attitude of benediction. Can this be intended for Our Lord? (5) is certainly vested ecclesiastically, with the pallium, seated with both hands on the knees, and may be an archbishop. (6) Two figures with ridiculously disproportioned short little legs. One has his arm round the waist of the other, whose hand is below the head of the first. The head of the second one is turned away from the face of the first, who appears to be kissing

him. Can this be intended for the Betrayal? (7) (Fig. 10) a figure seated, with large moustache and hands crossed. He is not in ecclesiastical vestments, and has the divided nether garments. (8) a figure seated with a sort of cape over the head, hand on lap, and divided nether garments. Mr. James considers this is intended for a judge. (9) a figure in similar costume holding a large scroll in both hands, also thought by Mr. James to be a judge. (10) a figure with arms crossed, bareheaded, in monastic habit, looking towards No. 9. (11) at west end again, two figures, one with tonsure, holding a circular object, the other with short legs standing up with face close to the ear of the first. This is thought to be the Devil tempting Judas Iscariot. In all the figures the vestments are intended to be elaborate with beading, etc. The figures are about 16 inches high.

With the exception of the south doorway, the exterior of the Church is not specially interesting. The walls are composed of rubble, coated with roughcast, and much concealed by ivy. The roofs are covered with red tiles of no great antiquity. The Norman windows are quite plain externally, without any attempted enrichment of the arches. Some have been renewed. There is a corresponding one in the west gable. There are buttresses at the west angles of the nave, and one on the south wall supporting the chancel arch. A doorway on the south of the Chancel looks new. The south doorway, (Fig. 11) which is figured in the 6th volume of the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal*, within a debased porch, is very fine and rather late Norman. It has a chamfered hoodmould, much mutilated, with a series of elliptical figures, each enclosing a large pellet on the angle, and two recessed orders. On the outer is small raised and recessed zigzag on the face and bold raised zigzag on the angle, and another course of bold zigzag on the soffit, with smaller zigzag band on either side. This order is supported on a grooved and chamfered abacus, and an engaged shaft with a series of labels attached to it from the outer jambs. The west capital has a beaded inverted trefoil on each face, the east has foliage on the angle and on either side. To the inner order is a band of beaded zigzag and bold angle engaged roll, carried round the arch and continued without imposts down the jambs to the ground. There is a votive cross on the inner east jamb, and one more on the roll attached to the east jamb. On the interior side the arch is plain and more lofty than the main outer arch. The door has square panelling and is perhaps of Elizabethan date. The outer arch of the porch is late debased perpendicular, flat, and with

AVINGTON CHURCH.



Fig. 10.

THE FONT.

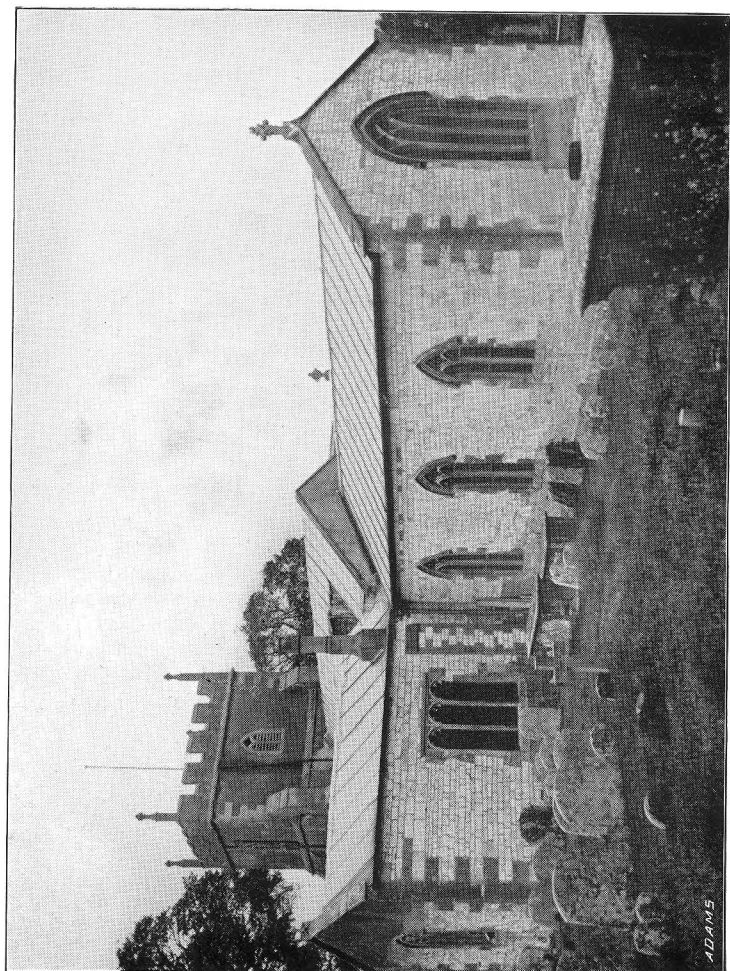
AVINGTON CHURCH.



Fig. 11.

SOUTH DOORWAY.

ASHBURY CHURCH.



FROM THE SOUTH EAST.

Fig. 12.

ADAMS

the initials RC. on the spandrels, and a sun-dial on the lintel. The initials commemorate Richard Choke, who was resident at the Manor House about the year 1574. On the east and west side of the porch is a small square opening enclosing a quatrefoil. These were probably brought from the Manor Barn, where two similar ones still remain. Over the outer doorway, within the porch, is a very elaborate lozenge shaped achievement, which in Ashmole's time was hanging in the chancel, and which he describes as embodying the arms of William James, of Denford, who was commemorated by a flat stone in the chancel with the following inscription :—

William James, Esq., deceased June 24, 1666, aged 47.

“Enter dear soul into thy Masters Joyes

Body rest here till summoned by his Voice.”

The quarterings on the achievement include the arms of Dunch and other distinguished families. The crest of the James, an ostrich, appears, and over the other portion, a lion holding an apple. The motto below “Jaime a Jamais” is a pun on the name of James. There is a lozenge shaped black frame with a skull at the top and bottom corners, an hour glass on each side corner, and cross bones between. It no doubt dates from about 1666.

There was formerly an early English bellcote on the west gable of the nave, which is mentioned in Parker's Ecclesiastical Topography, but this has been removed. The west window was put in by Mr. James during his incumbency. Mr. Blackwell the present Rector, is very apprehensive as to the stability of the walls and roof of the Church, and I trust he may succeed in raising the modest sum, which he is advised must be expended, to put the fabric in a sound condition. The whitewash on the interior walls may well be removed at the same time.

A very pretty drive through Hungerford, Shefford, Lambourne, past Ashdown Park and close to the White Horse Hill will bring us to Ashbury, on the extreme western boundary of the County, where we shall find another most interesting Church, (Fig. 12) which has recently been undergoing restoration, the chancel having been taken in hand by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Unfortunately the tower, roofs, and other portions of the Church are stated to be in urgent need of repair and a sum of £2,000 is required to carry out the work, which is too formidable an amount for the residents of a country parish to raise without some outside aid. The tower and nave roof have already been taken in hand. A circular, supported by the Bishop and Archdeacon has been sent out by the Vicar, the



Rev. Laurence C. Hamerton, which it is hoped will not be put into the waste paper basket, but will be treated with the kindly consideration this important subject deserves.

As might be anticipated, a large and important parish like this, in the fertile Vale of the White Horse, and with so many antiquarian surroundings, must be replete with incidents of historical and traditional interest, and much information can be gleaned from a pamphlet on the Parish of Ashbury, published by the then Vicar, the Rev. Henry Miller, in 1877, and kindly lent to me by Mr. Hamerton. Ashdown Park, Wayland Smith's Forge, and other antiquities are to be found within its confines, and much additional matter could be collected for this paper. We must not, however, overload it now, but keep as far as possible to the description of the Churches. It will, however, help to elucidate our subject to state that in the ninth century the village of Ashbury was granted to the Abbey of Abingdon, and somewhat later the chief Manor was presented to the Abbey of Glastonbury, so that up to the time of the Reformation this parish enjoyed the patronage of these two great mitred abbeys. At the dissolution of the monasteries the manor was granted to the family of Essex of Lambourne, and in 1625 was purchased by Sir William Craven, the ancestor of Earl Craven, to whom it now belongs. The old Manor House still stands in the village, with parts of the moat and some very nice perpendicular windows and other interesting remains of 15th century date. It is a two-storied building and belonged to Abingdon Abbey.

As has been stated, the Church is a very interesting edifice. It is dedicated to St. Mary, and consists of a west tower, nave, aisles with north porch, transepts and chancel. The earliest portion of the present Church dates from the second half of the 12th century, (Fig. 13) the south doorway being a fine specimen of this period. The Church had aisles of this date, as evidenced by the western responds of the nave arcade still in situ. In the 13th century the tower was built, and the old chancel was probably pulled down and enlarged. The transepts were also rebuilt during this and the early part of the succeeding century, and two or three windows were inserted in the later decorated period. In the latter half of the 15th century the old Norman nave was burned or pulled down, and the present arcades and roofs were constructed, and windows inserted in the south aisle and south transept walls. The beautiful north porch, with parvise above, was also added at this time, and no doubt became the principal entrance to the Church. The ground has

ASHBURY CHURCH.

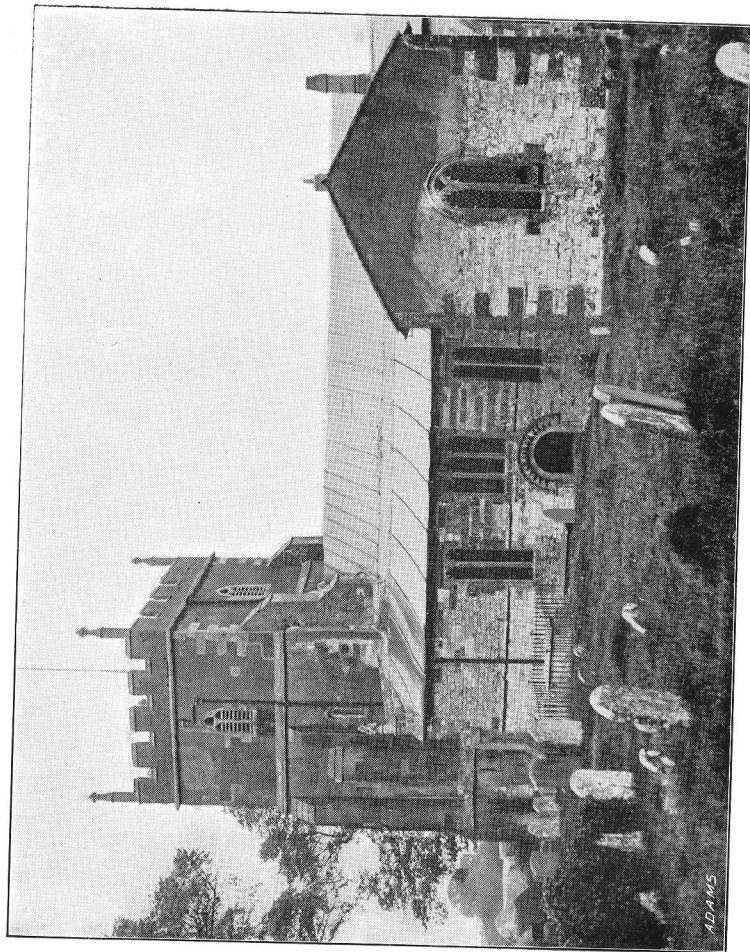
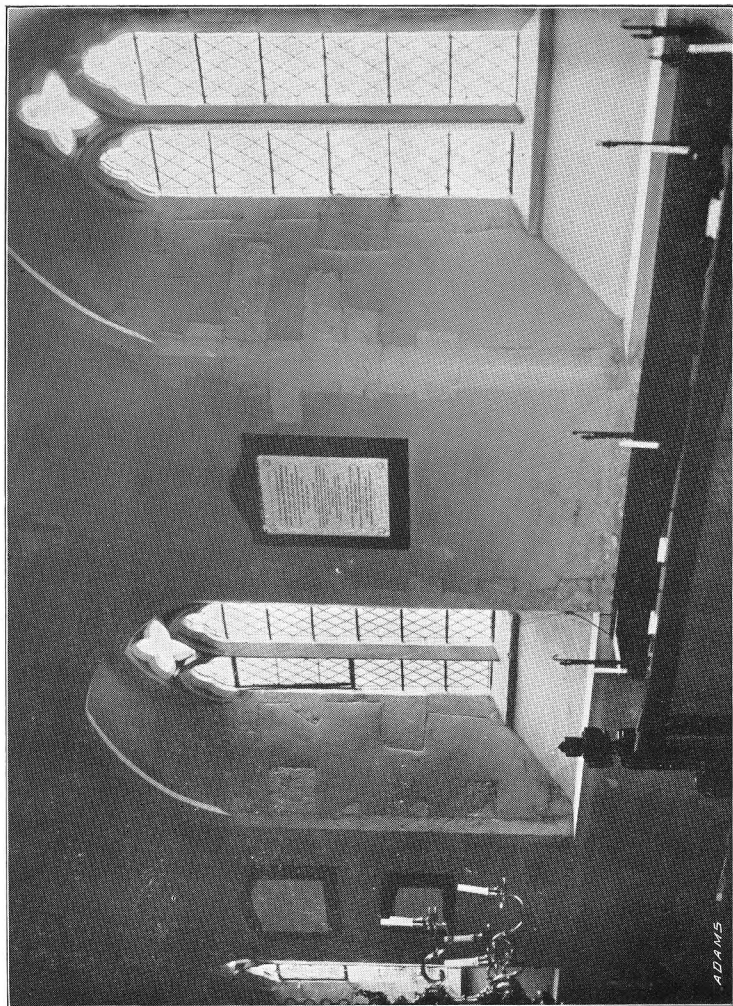


Fig. 13.

FROM THE SOUTH.

ASHBURY CHURCH.



WINDOWS, SOUTH SIDE OF CHANCEL.

Fig. 14.

ASHBURY CHURCH.



Fig. 15. BRASS TO JOHN DE WALDEN.

ASHBURY CHURCH.



Fig. 16. BRASS TO THOMAS DE BUSSHBURY.

ASHBURY CHURCH.

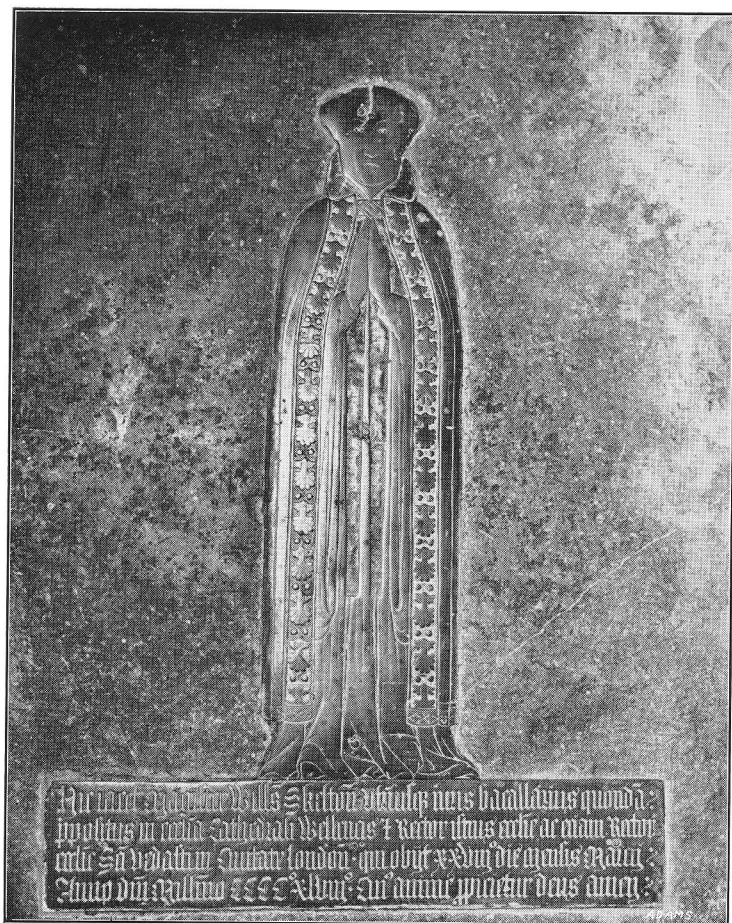


Fig. 17. BRASS TO WILLIAM SKELTON.



risen considerably on the south side of the Church, the fine Norman doorway being many feet below the present surface.

Let us now commence our survey of the Church, taking our stand in the interior of the chancel. This has been recently restored by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and is of late 13th century date. The east window is of three lights, early decorated, with intersecting mullions. On the south side (Fig. 14) are three two-light windows, and one more on the north, all early decorated with a quatrefoil in the head. In the south wall is a piscina with trefoiled canopy and plain basin of the same date.

On the chancel floor are three very interesting brasses. The earliest shows the bust of a civilian with curly hair and beard, and hands clasped on his breast, and the following rhyming inscription below (Fig. 15) :—

Continet hec fossa de Walden ossa Johannis  
Que ds ad cela ducat ppetuis annis.

which is freely translated by Ashmole as follows :—

John de Walden's bones this grave contains,  
Whose soul with God for ever now remains.

It is hoped something may be brought to light as to who this John de Walden was, where he lived, and whether he was a benefactor to the Church. The date of the brass is about the year 1350. On the north side is the brass of a priest (Fig. 16) (the head gone) fully vested, with hands clasped on breast, and inscription below :—

Hic jacet dns Thomas d' Busshbury Canoic' du vixit in ecclia  
hertford & Rector istius ecclie qui obiit XXIX<sup>o</sup> die mensis marcii  
Anno dni M<sup>o</sup>CCCC<sup>o</sup> nono cui anime ppicietur deus amen.

which may be translated :

“ Here lies Master Thomas de Bushbury canon, while he lived, in the Church of Hertford (or, as Ashmole renders it, and with greater probability, Hereford), and Rector of this Church, who died on the 29th day of the month of March in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and nine, on whose soul God have mercy amen.”

He seems to have been a man of some importance, and one would like to know more about him. The brass effigy is about 26 inches high. On the south side is another brass (Fig. 17) to a priest, the figure 28 inches high, richly vested, with a pattern of

pomegranates on the cope, and hands clasped on the breast, and the following inscription below :—

Hic jacet Magister Wills Skelton utriusq iuris bacallarius quonda  
ppositus in ecclia Cathedrali Wellensis & Rector istius ecclie ac eciam Rector  
ecclie Sci Vedasti in Civitate london qui obiit XXVIII<sup>o</sup> die mensis Marcii  
Anno dni Millimo CCCC<sup>o</sup> XLVIII<sup>o</sup> cui anime ppicietur deus amen.

which may be translated thus :

“ Here lies Mr. William Skelton bachelor of law and divinity (as rendered by Ashmole), sometime provost in the Cathedral Church of Wells, and Rector of this Church and also Rector of the Church of St. Vedast in the City of London, who died on the 28th day of the month of March in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and forty-eight, on whose soul God have mercy amen.”

He also must have been a personage of distinction, as he was thought worthy to hold three important offices at one time in places so far apart as Wells, Ashbury and London. There is a south door way to the chancel with segmental headed interior arch.

*( To be continued. )*

MEMORIALS OF OLD CHESHIRE, Edited by the Archdeacon of Chester, and P. H. Ditchfield (George Allen and Son). This is the most recent volume of the memorials of the Counties of England series, of which over twenty have been published. The general editor has been assisted by Archdeacon Barber, who was formerly well-known in the Oxford diocese as Diocesan Inspector of Schools. The volume has appeared just in time for the Chester Pageant, but for obvious reasons it cannot be reviewed in these pages. For the same reason we cannot review two other works published recently by the Editor of this journal, viz :—

THE MANOR HOUSES OF ENGLAND (Batsford).

THE PARSON'S PLEASANCE (Messrs. Mills and Boon).

“ A HISTORY OF ABINGDON,” by Mr. James Townsend, M.A., with illustrations, has just been published by Mr. Frowde. It is a handsome volume and covers a period of over twelve centuries and has involved considerable research. The illustrations are chiefly of the older documents of the Abingdon Chronicle (Chronicon Abbandoniæ). A notice of the book must be deferred.

