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Notes on the Churches of Aldermaston, Padworth, Englefield and Tidmarsh.

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IN the corner of the chapel are the two portions of the old 15th century rood beam, recently recovered from the estate timber yard. They still retain traces of their original decoration, and it is hoped it will be possible to reinstate them in their original situation.

An ancient wooden triptych now stands above the Communion Table. It represents the story of the Nativity with the adoration of the Shepherds and the offerings of the Magi, and is said to be the work of Adrian von Orlei, a painter in the Low Countries, who flourished between the years 1480 and 1540. This has been recently presented to the church, as has a beautiful twelve light bronze candelabra, traditionally reported to have been brought from France, and a large plaster cast of a sculpture from a church in Italy, with a representation of the Annunciation and the Marriage and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. This has been fixed against the east wall of the chapel.

The whole of the chapel, except the portion occupied by the figure of St. Christopher, has been decorated with double masonry lines in Indian red, and with a rose or some other conventional

flower on a stalk within each compartment. This ornamentation has been executed on the window splays, and at the back and sides of the piscina and niche for image. On the lower part of the jambs of the south window is a pattern of red blotches, not uncommon on arches of this same date. The decoration seems to date from about 1300.

On the south wall to the east of the window, and in full view from the low side-window in the nave, is a very large and early portraiture of St. Christopher (fig. 9). He is represented beneath a triangular-headed canopy in bands of red and yellow with a cinque-foiled fringe in red. He is apparently bare-headed, with cloak and tunic outlined in red, and bare below the knees. He has the Infant Saviour held to the west of him on his left hand. Our Saviour, with dark hair, holds the orb in His left hand, and is giving the benediction with the right. St. Christopher is advancing westward, and holds a curious sort of eel or fish spear with teeth on the lower part in his right hand. An eel and two or three fish are disporting themselves in the water, and a mermaid, with deep crimson hair, is introduced on the west side of the picture. The painting is a very early representation of this Saint, probably not later than 1350. A still earlier one was found not long ago at the church of Stanford Dingley in the same neighbourhood, which unfortunately has been destroyed. Part of a scalloped border in red and white alternately remains below the picture.

On the opposite side of the window is a later painting (fig. 10) executed over the masonry pattern, and unluckily imperfect. We have here a very rich canopy with finials in yellow ochre, surmounting a chapel or other edifice, with two windows or compartments and a central shaft or pillar in deep red. The underside of the canopy has two pendants, and is painted a delicate pink. On the lower part is an altar with embattled verge, in front of which can be made out the head and shoulders, apparently, of the kneeling figure of a young man with yellow hair and cloak, low red cap with ostrich feathers, and the nimbus. Above can be discerned the wings and head of an angel descending with a mitre to the kneeling figure. It is uncertain to whom the painting refers though probably it commemorates the consecration of St. Nicholas or the miraculous restoration of his episcopal robes, after he had been unfrocked for boxing Arius on the ear at the Council of Nice in the year 325. This incident is represented by Paul Veronese, and other early painters, but not, it is believed, in mural painting elsewhere in

England. The date of this Aldermaston picture is probably late in the fifteenth century. On the east wall above the image recess are three scenes, possibly alluding to St. Nicholas, painted over the masonry pattern. In the lower tier are two ships, apparently tossed by the waves, with figures visible within them. In the next tier are two ecclesiastics with croziers, and above again two knights in armour, and what may be an altar. May this be intended to portray the aid of St. Nicholas being invoked, his appearance to the distressed mariners, and the grateful travellers making a thank-offering at his shrine? It is somewhat indistinct, and probably of fifteenth century date. The whole has a powdering of crimson cinquefoils, and a nice scroll border in red. A much earlier portraiture of St. Nicholas, and the miracle of the restoring the three students to life, still remain at the neighbouring church of Padworth.

During the restoration in 1896, colouring was found, more or less distinct throughout the church, on the jambs of all the windows and the arch opening to the chapel. On the arch itself is a kind of festoon ornament in red, and at least two courses of decoration on the splay; a very nice scroll border in red remains on the north wall of the nave near the west end, and parts of other early designs elsewhere on the walls. There is an early text much defaced within a red ornamental border, probably of sixteenth century date, on the north wall of the nave at the east end, and a similar one over the low side-window. Three sets of the Commandments painted over each other were found over the blocked north doorway, and between the low side and adjoining window a record, twice depicted, of a sum of money bequeathed to the parish by Messrs. Blackman and Holliman in 1721.

With regard to the monuments in the church, it may at first sight seem curious that, considering the importance of the family residing within a stone's throw of the church, we do not find more memorials of the early members, who no doubt were regular worshippers in the church in the days of old.

We must, however, remember that Aldermaston was only one of the residences of the Achards and Delamares, and that at an early date the rectory and other privileges annexed to the church were presented to the priory of Sherborne. It is therefore probable that the beautiful church of Sparsholt was from the earliest times selected as the final resting-place of the lords of Aldermaston; and we accordingly find there, under rich crocketed canopies, a cross-legged effigy no doubt portraying an early member of the

Achard family, as well as wooden effigies of a knight and his two wives, probably commemorating the last of the original stock.

In many of the windows is the Achard shield (*or a bend fusily sable*), and there can be no doubt from the excellence of the architectural features, mainly late Norman and decorated, of the care and expenditure incurred by the lords of the manor on their parish church, which is one of the most interesting in the county. The Delamares appear to have been great benefactors to the Hospital of St. Mary and John the Baptist at Basingstoke, and in the Chapel now called the Holy Ghosts Chapel were some beautiful monuments to members of this family. We do not therefore find any memorial at Aldermaston prior to the middle of the fourteenth century, the earliest being a large blue marble stone on the floor of the south transept or chapel. At three of the corners is a shield in brass with the arms of Achard quartering those of Delamare (*gules two lions passant in pale argent*). The fourth shield has been torn away, as has a small brass plate from the centre of the stone, no doubt commemorating the name of the deceased. There is no record as to who was here interred, but from the armorial shields, it seems reasonable to conclude that here were laid to rest the remains of one of the first members of the Delamare family who came to reside at Aldermaston.

The next monument in point of date is very much later, and is the noble altar tomb to Sir George Forster* and Elizabeth his wife, the granddaughter and coheiress of Sir Thomas, the last of the Delamares, which stands in the south chapel beneath the arch opening to the nave. It is perhaps one of the most elegant and beautiful monuments of its period, and the wonderful attention shown to the most minute details, and the excellence of every portion of the carving, make it a work of art worthy of the most careful examination, and of a more graphic description than the writer is able to confer upon it. The whole of the monument and effigies is composed of alabaster of the finest quality. The effigies are of large size: (fig. 11A) that of the lady, who occupies the right or south side, being 6 feet 3 inches; while that of her husband is 6 feet 1 inch in length. They rest on a table tomb 6 feet 6 inches in length by 4 feet 3 inches in breadth and 3 feet in height. This is set on a stone plinth standing up about

* This Sir George was the son of Sir Humfrey Forster, of Harpsden, near Henley-on-Thames. He was a distinguished soldier and a Knight of the Order of the Bath. He received a special summons to attend on King Henry VIII. at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

4 inches above the present floor, and with a margin of about 7 inches all round the tomb. The lady (fig. 12) lies with her head on two pillows, supported by an angel on either side. She has a kerchief in three folds round her hair, a long cloak carried in graceful folds to her feet, fastened by a chain with a rose as a pendant across the chest. Her dress, also carried down to the feet, is cut with a square opening below the throat, showing the upper part of an under garment, or possibly a frill to the dress. This has slashed sleeves probably of velvet, with lace frills partly covering the hands. Another thin vestment, probably of silk, is shown, in some way fastened at the throat. She has a heart-shaped amulet attached to a triple chain on the breast, and a girdle round the waist, with a buckle or fastening on the left side, to which was perhaps attached an ornament similar to that worn by the lady on the west face of the tomb. Her hands, now mainly broken away, are clasped on her breast. Her feet are shown enclosed in broad-toed shoes similar to those of her husband. A little dog wearing a collar is introduced on the north side, tugging at the bottom of her cloak. By her side lies her husband (fig. 13) in complete armour. His head is bare, and rests on his tilting helm with the hind's head bearing a collar with chain and fetterlock attached as the crest. A cable band is carried round below the crest, and to this is attached the mantling, no doubt of silk, and in this instance unusually large. It is spread out in very elegant fashion, the folds with two tassels on either side being carried down nearly to the waist on each side of the knight. The interior of the helmet is shown with the folds of the material, doubtless silk, forming the lining, probably to prevent the chafing of the metal. A very pretty border is displayed on the lower rim of the helmet, and the buckle with which it is fastened is also portrayed. The effigy presents us with a most complete specimen of the armour of this Transitional period. He has the steel cuirass, with the raised epaulieres fastened by a buckle on each side. The arm guards and elbow pieces of plate are clearly defined. The haubergeon, of link mail, appears under the cuissarts or thigh pieces, which are fastened by five buckles to the cuirass at the waist, and are folded back in front. The legs are encased in mail, with large genouillieres or knee guards. The sollerets are square-toed and also of metal. Most of his sword, which is suspended at his left side from a belt attached to the back of the waist, is broken away. His gauntlets, also much damaged, lie on the tomb by his left knee, while his dagger is laid by his right side. He does not carry a shield; but

on the cuirass on the right side is a loop, probably of leather, for the strap carried over the right shoulder as a support to the shield on the breast, as shown in the figures of the weepers below. His feet rest on a buck or stag, both the antlers being now broken away. His hands are bare, and clasped in attitude of prayer on his breast. He wears a very beautiful and remarkable collar of SS, with a portcullis and Tudor rose pendant, on which his hands are resting. It is probable that some colour and gilding was used to beautify parts at any rate of these figures, and traces are still apparent on the head-dress of the lady and the collar of SS of the knight.

The table tomb is divided on the north and south sides into eight compartments, with beautiful crocketed double canopies and central finial to each, and with a banded shaft forming a division between each compartment. On the north side are eight figures of knights, all in plate armour and varied in their attitudes. They all carry a shield on the left arm fastened by a strap over the right shoulder. Nos. 1 and 5 from the east hold the sword in their hands; the others have their swords in the scabbards at their sides. Nos. 1, 3, 5 and 6 have flat caps probably with plumes, the others being bareheaded. The western one is the most singular: He is represented as cross-legged and carrying a tilting helm in his right hand. The position of the hands is varied in each instance. The armour of the several figures is a miniature imitation of that of the effigy of Sir George. On the east side are three similar canopied compartments. The central one is now unoccupied, while in that on either side is the figure of a knight similar to those on the north.* On the south side are eight compartments similar to those on the north. There has been a female figure within each, but the fifth from the east has been removed. The effigies are all slightly varied in their attire and the pose of their hands, &c.; but they also are, in the main, miniature representations of the figure of the Lady Elizabeth above them.

On the west side (fig. 11B), within an oblong panel, is a large armorial shield from which the tinctures have disappeared. It has formerly been surrounded by a circular frame or garter, but the sides have been broken off. There has been a raised inscription thrown out by colouring, of which the words "Monsyr Forster" alone remain. Above the shield is a tilting helm with the crest, probably

* Neale, in his notice of this monument, in the *Views of Seats, &c.*, Vol. IV., New Series, states "that there are also at the foot three more sons." Was this an assumption, or has the figure been removed since his time?

the hind's head with a ducal crown round the collar and the chain and fetterlock attached to it. There is the flowing mantling fastened by a cable band to the upper part, and spread out in four pieces with large tassels at the terminations.

On the south kneels, on two cushions, a lady with right hand raised. Her costume is similar to that of the main effigy, and she has a girdle round the waist, with a circular object attached to it by a chain. At her feet is a helmet with mantling and goat's head for a crest. On the opposite (north) side, also kneeling on two cushions, is the figure of a knight in armour somewhat different to that of Sir George. He has a garment open at the sides over the armour and down to the thighs—the tabard. His hands are broken away. He is bareheaded, and his helmet with mantling and the hind's head crest, similar to that under the head of Sir George, is placed on the ground in front of him. It seems probable that these two figures on the west face of the tomb represent Sir Humfrey Forster, the eldest son and heir of Sir George, and his wife, the daughter of Lord Sandys of the Vyne, who have already been mentioned as having put in the armorial shields in old glass now placed in the north window of the nave facing this monument. It has been thought by some that the figures round the tomb represent the children of Sir George and his lady, and the statement of Leland, in his notice of Sir George and Lady Elizabeth, that they had twenty children would support this contention.

In addition to the kneeling figures at the west face, whom we assume to be the eldest son and his lady, there are, including the missing figures, eleven more sons and eight daughters, which would make up the required number. It may, however, be possible that Leland, who probably saw this monument soon after its erection, may have jumped to the conclusion that these figures represented the children of the deceased, and not, as we usually interpret them, "weepers." In most of the series assumed to be "weepers" we find religious personages introduced, and we should have expected this to be the case here where there are so large a number of figures. It is possible, therefore, that the assertion that they are the portraits of the members of the family is correct. At the angles of the monument are engaged cable shafts of Italian character, and round the verge of the upper slab on which the figures rest is the following inscription, commencing at the west end of the south side :—

"Here lieth Sir george forster knyght son and heyre of humfray forster esquier coson and one of the heyres of Sir stephyn popham | knyght and elizabeth wif of the Same sir george dauntur and heire of John dalaunare esquier | son and heire of thomas dalaunare knyght whiche elizabeth dyed the vii day of december in the yere of our lord god M^{CCCC} | RIII and whiche syr george dye in the yere of our lord god ."

The last date is left in blank, and no provision had been made to complete the inscription in raised letters, as in the rest of the legend. There are traces of colouring between the letters. The canopies above the smaller figures have been richly painted with blue and gold, and the backs of the several compartments have been similarly decorated. The monument is known to have been erected in the lifetime of Sir George, who died in 1533, and may justly claim to be one of the finest examples of monumental art to be found in any parish church in England.*

On the tie-beam across the chapel is an iron bracket and spike, on which is fixed a helmet and crest said to have belonged to Sir George Forster. It has been carefully examined, and is pronounced to belong mainly to the period of the commencement of the sixteenth century, the vizor being possibly of rather later date. The crest, the hind's head, is of wood, and has been painted a delicate pink. It is somewhat worm-eaten, but otherwise in good preservation. Another of these wooden crests remains at Cobham Church, Kent, but it is believed they are very uncommon. The banner of Sir George Forster also hangs from the king-post above the tie-beam. It does not seem to be so early as his times. It has his name and the following armorial bearings quarterly, viz.: (1) Forster, (2) Harpsden, (3) Popham, (4) Zouch of Deene.

On the floor of the chapel, close to the south side of the monument of Sir George, is a large blue stone with outlines of the figures of a civilian and lady with scrolls from their mouths, formerly represented in brass, but now removed, a goodly array of sons and

* In the Rutland Chapel, on the north side of the nave of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, is the monument of Sir George Manners, Lord Roos, and his lady, who was the daughter of the Duchess of Exeter, and niece of King Edward IV. She died in 1526, in the same year as the Lady Elizabeth Forster. This monument resembles in a remarkable manner the one at Aldermaston. The costumes of the main effigies are almost identical, and among the weepers or children is a small cross-legged knight corresponding with the figure at Aldermaston. Is it presumptuous to assume that these two monuments were executed by, or at any rate under the supervision of, the same artist?

daughters being now only shown in outline. The following inscription still remains (fig. 14A):

“Here lyeth Willm Forster Esquier Forde of Aldermaston
sonne and heyre of | Syr humffrage Forster knyght and
Jane his wyffe one of the daughters of Syr | Anthony
hungerforde of Dohne Amney knyght w^{ch} Willm deceased
p^e xth daye of | January Anno dni 1574 and his said wyffe
the daye Anno dni.”

There have been four large shields at the corners, but that, at the south-east corner is lost. At the south-west is the shield of William Forster, divided into six compartments with the following arms: (1) Forster, (2) Popham, (3) Zouch of Deene, (4) Delamare, (5) Archard, and (6) Forster. On the other upper shield (fig. 15A) these coats-of-arms impale those of his wife with no less than three rows of quarterings, three coats in each row. The arms of Hungerford appear in the first field, and those of Courtenay are also included. The shield of the lady (fig. 15B) with the same quarterings remains below her effigy on the north-east corner of the slab. The brass figures were about 24 inches in height.

On a large ledger stone of polished black marble now let into the floor, but formerly, according to Ashmole, “on a raised monument adjoining to the South Wall of the said Chappel,” is a brass plate with the following inscription (fig. 14B):

DEDICATED TO THE PRECIOUS MEMORIE OF FOURE VIRTUOUS
SISTERS DAUGHTERS OF S^R HUMPHREY FORSTER B^T.; AND OF
ANNA HIS WIFE, VIZ: ANNA, WHO DYED MAY THE 16
1638 AGED 18 YEARES 5 MONTHES, MARY DYED SEPTEM:
BER THE 9TH 1638 AGED 14 YEARES AND TEN MONTHES
BRIDGETT DYED MAY THE 29TH 1637 AGED 10 YEARES
AND ONE MONETH AND MARGARETT WHO DYED FEB:
RUARY THE 19TH 1623 AGED ONE YEARE & 6 MONETHS

LIKE BORNE LIKE NEW BORNE HERE LIKE DEAD T^Y LYE,
FOUER VIRGINE SISTERS, DECK'D WITH PIETIE,
BEAUTIE, AND OTHER GRACES, WHICH COMMEND,
AND MAKE THEM ALL LIKE BLESSED IN THEIR END.

Above, a square brass plate has been removed, mentioned by Ashmole as “having thereon engraven, the Pictures of four young Maidens, each less in Stature than the other.” They were the daughters of the Humphrey and Anne Forster who built the fine

mansion in 1636, which was unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1843.

On a large black marble ledger stone to the east of this is an inscription to the above named "the Ladie Anne Forster," who died in 1673. There are also stones with inscriptions to Ann daughter of William Forester died 1654, Rebekah daughter of Sir Humphrey and Judeth Forester, died 1676, John Forester died 1674, and Anne Congreve "Lady of this Manor," died 1780. Against the south wall is the large altar tomb to Mr. Ralph Congreve, who married the Hon. Charlotte Stawell, the last representative of the Forsters, and who died in 1775. On the north of the chancel is a large monument erected to the memory of the Hon. William Stawell, only son of Lord Stawell of Somerton, who died in 1740 (his mother died and was buried near here in 1748), by the Hon. Charlotte Congreve in 1760. She died in 1762 and there is an inscription on a sepulchral urn above:

On y^e 24th of July 1762, Died
The Hon^{ble} Charlotte Congreve
Whose affection as a Wife, and
Whose sincerity as a Friend

Deserve the most lasting Remembrance.

Let into the south wall of the chancel, are two stones, formerly over the entrance to the vault under the vestry recording the names of several of the Forsters, including Sir Humphrey who built the mansion destroyed in 1843, who died between the years 1660 and 1683. There is a large black marble slab under the Communion Table to the memory of Robert Dixon, buried here in 1723.

"He was Minister of Aldermaston

"43 years

"Att y^e same time

"Rector of Woolhampton

"28 years."

He founded four almshouses in the village in 1706.

In the churchyard are numerous old headstones. One has a date 1683, and the following legend:

STAY LOVING FRIENDS

AND THINK ON ME

AS I AM NOW

SO YOU MUST BE.

Let us now briefly point out what remains of interest on the exterior. The church walls are composed of rough materials—flints, &c., and are covered with a coating of rough-cast of a

yellowish colour, which has been carefully preserved. The roof is formed of red tiles, and is high-pitched throughout. The Decorated window (fig. 16) on the south of the nave has a square label, and those on the south of the chapel, and north of nave facing it, have the usual arched hood moulding.

The window on the north side of the nave has a continuous hoodmould carried round each of the two lights. The small, high side-window on the north is set within a square frame with spandril spaces on either side of the head of the main light. There are nice angle buttresses at the east end of the chancel, and two large buttresses on the north of the chancel and nave, erected within recent times to support the walls which have given way on this side.

The north doorway, now blocked up, has a plain semicircular arch, with chamfered edge to the arch and jambs, and stops at the base of the jambs. The west window has a hoodmould terminating on the head of a gentleman on the south, and a lady with horned head-dress on the north. They probably represent one of the Delamares and his lady.

The west doorway (fig. 17) is a very good specimen of Norman work, and is figured in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*. It has two reveals with a hollow and bold cable moulding on the outer order. This rests on a massive chamfered abacus, with a shallow pattern of saltires within squares scratched on the upper part. The shafts are ornamented, the north with the chevron, the south with the cable, pattern. On the capitals on either side are two doves in relief plumbing, apparently of the same date as the rest of the arch. A shallow ornament similar to that on the abacus is incised above them. The inner order and jambs are plain. On both the outer and inner jambs are numerous small crosses, probably of a votive character, and commemorating promises of gifts to the church by former residents, when about to embark on a journey or other dangerous undertaking. They are to be found on most Norman doorways, and sometimes, as in the case of one at St. Margaret Roding, of an elaborate character. This doorway probably dates from the time of Henry I. or *circa* 1130, and is a good specimen of the Norman style, though not so ornate as those at Padworth, Bucklebury, and Tidmarsh in the same neighbourhood. It has clearly been shifted from its original situation, and the voussoirs of the outer order have been carelessly put together, so that the cable is not continuous, as it was of course originally designed to be.

(To be continued.)