



History of the Parish of Beenham.

By Mary Sharp.

(Continued from page 20.)

In 1762, on the 25th day of June, during the incumbency of Thomas Stevens, "a sudden and destructive storm of hail happened in the parishes of Sulhamstead Abbots, Padworth, Ufton and Beenham, which laid waste 700 acres and upwards of wheat, barley, oats, peas, beans and hops." This description is quoted from a Letter Patent issued by George III. to all Archbishops, Bishops and Sheriffs, authorising and exhorting them to make a collection throughout the country for the relief of the poor sufferers. In the letter the damage sustained is said to have amounted to £1143 and upwards, "and therefore in pursuance of an Act of Parliament made in the 7th year of the reign of Queen Anne for the better collecting of Charity money on briefs by Letters Patent" the King "commands all ministers and anyone who teaches and preaches in any meeting of the people called Quakers" to receive the same letter, and that the sums collected shall be delivered to agents "to see that the money be paid to the said poor sufferers." The names of the said agents were :—George Talbot, Christopher Griffith (of Padworth), Charles Perkins (of Ufton), Ralf Congreve (of Aldermaston), James Morgan (of Mortimer), Henry Lannoy Hunter (of Beech Hill) and Stephen Chase, Esquires.

A collection was made in Beenham itself according to their directions, the sum collected being 1/4d. Perhaps it was hardly to be expected that the "poor sufferers" themselves should subscribe to the relief fund. The amount required was then estimated at £7040. It is noticeable that no name of any landowner or lord of the manor of Beenham occurs in the list of trustees. Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwicke, held the Great Tithes of the living at this time in right of his wife, daughter and heiress of Mrs. Girle, but he probably resided on his own property on the banks of the Thames. Mrs. Zinzan was then living at Beenham House, perhaps as a

tenant only, for the estate was the property of Dr. John Bostock, Rector of Windsor, who also was most likely absent ; all which may perhaps account for the small help received from the people of the village.

In 1787 an unknown person gave a small freehold consisting of four tenements with a plot of ground adjoining, containing about 3 roods 37 poles, as it is stated on a notice board in the Church "for the sole intent and purpose of repairing and beautifying the Parish Church of Beenham from the annual produce of the same for ever ; in testimony of the above gift and in pursuance of an order from the Archdeacon of Berks at his personal visitation. . . . This record to be hung up in the Parish Church aforesaid."

(Signed) WM. ROBINSON }
T. SMALLBONES } Churchwardens.

The person unknown is supposed to have been a former church bell-ringer.

Dr. John Douglas was the next vicar (appointed in 1788), and it was during his tenure of office that another misfortune befell the parish. On a Sunday, July 6th, in 1793, the old Church, dating probably from the 12th century, was destroyed. The wooden belfry was struck by lightning, the bells were melted and the fire spread to the nave which was burnt to the ground, only the chancel remained standing. From a re-production of an old print, here given, it will be seen that the architectural merits of the building at the time of its destruction were not great. The frequent changes of patrons and wealthy landowners in the parish was probably the reason why no one generation had cared much for the repair and decoration of their church. The porch, probably of the date of William and Mary, was of brick ; a fairly good Tudor window is shown on the south side and the hood of another further east. Perhaps it was because the mullions of this last were out of repair that the window itself had been replaced by one with a plain round head of the same date as that of the porch ; and in the chancel there were two small Early English lights. To this, a few details as to the interior can be added from the recollection of the writer of what was still to be seen belonging to the old church in 1852 in the building which replaced it after the fire. Inside the porch there was an obtusely pointed doorway, in which hung a fine perpendicular oaken door with triple cusped panels. Unfortunately, to suit the necessity of a low organ, or singers' gallery, which was put up in the Church in later times, the upper part of the door had been nailed to the wall

above it and sawn off, so that the doorway was made to be square headed. The splays of the lancet windows in the chancel had been painted. This was proved by an energetic curate, once left in charge, who began carefully to scrape away the covering whitewash ; but before anything more than a few faint lines of colour were disclosed, a vigilant and indignant churchwarden forbade the investigation, and insisted, moreover, that the culprit should at his own expense re-whitewash the surface. The painting, therefore, whether of seraph or saint, or merely pattern, never again saw the light of day. A Brass in memory of William Carter, Gentleman, has been already mentioned ; what was probably its matrix still remained in a slab of the pavement of the narrow gangway of the Church in 1852, just opposite the door of the squire's square pew, though the metal, as being worth money, had then disappeared. Even the empty matrix, however, had its interest, but when inquired after in later times no one knew what had become of it. In the enthusiasm of the early days of revival of church building such trifling records of past ages were overlooked ; but this concerns the third Church of Beenham and is anticipating history.

When the Parishioners, the Ministers and the Churchwardens found that their Church was gone, they sent round a letter, on their own account this time, to the neighbouring towns and villages, expressing their earnest desire that their parish church should be rebuilt and rendered "fit for them to assemble therein for divine worship as speedily and conveniently as may be ; but, forasmuch as the expenses of doing the same will, according to the estimate of an able and experienced workman, amount to the sum of £600 and upwards, the petitioners are desirous to accept from charitable and well disposed persons such donations and voluntary contributions as they may think proper for, or towards, the re-building of the said Church." Certainly no petition could be more delicately worded, and though this time it was not supported by any Royal letter or command, yet the result was perhaps as satisfactory as the last and even more so. The whole sum collected amounted to £579 14s. 11½d., exclusive of £239 7s. 2d.—the cost of a new peal of six bells, towards which sum the Beenham ringers subscribed £2 11s. 6d.

The Rev. John Bostock, Vicar of Windsor, who was living at Beenham House at the time, with his younger brother, Sir Charles Rich, added £100 to the subscribed sum, and wrote the following kindly letter to Dr. Douglas alluding to the occasion :—"January 15th, 1795. Dear Sir,—I set out this morning to call upon you but

found the wind so strong and cold and my workmen alarmed me so much with accounts of the ice on the pond that I gave up the point. The method you propose to take to relieve the poor seems to be a very good one ; if they are not out of work through the severe weather, in my opinion it is the best that can be adopted. If the hard weather breaks up soon and the many that are out of work can return to their labour I shall propose to apply the remainder of our subscription at Windsor (which is a large one) to that use. I think it very advisable to have the account of the subscriptions to Beenham Church printed. I flatter myself that that of New Windsor will make no despicable figure, it amounts to £17 10s. and I hope some few that I have not met with will increase it. I have received likewise the subscription from Old Windsor, it amounts to 8s. which I will likewise be answerable for. I mean to give 5 guineas to your fund for lowering the price of bread to the poor. I shall be happy to see when the account is printed that many parishes exceed New Windsor, but I have my doubts. Mr. Nind, whom I saw accidentally, told me his subscription for the church amounted to £2 7s. If I can see you to-morrow I will, but I return early to Reading on my way to Windsor. Mrs. Bostock joins in compliments to Mrs. D. and Mrs. Webb.

I am, etc., J. BOSTOCK.

I enclose £23 3s. I hope your rheumatism and other complaints will soon leave you."

The immensely decreased value of money within the last hundred years is forcibly brought home to us by the fact here recorded that at the close of the 18th century it was thought possible to build a church for the sum of £600. It is true that rather more was collected, and it is said that, in consequence, the architect, who in his estimate had only provided for square headed windows, finding there was money to spare, most liberally altered his plans and made them round headed. It is also true that the building when finished was of the most meagre description, but it satisfied the requirements of an age which as yet felt no craving for any outward manifestations of the beauty of holiness. The tower of the present Church, except for the west window, is as it was built in the year 1800, and the nave of the Church was to match. The little chancel, with its narrow lancet windows, alone remained of the original fabric.

Mr. Robert Baker succeeded Dr. Douglas in 1808, but resigned the living two years later in favour of Mr. John Bushnell, still by the presentation of Mrs. Mary Stevens. At her death she bequeathed

the advowson to him and it has remained the property of the representatives of his family ever since. Mr. Bushnell at the same time held a Lectureship at Thatcham and he seems to have kept in touch with his University of Oxford, as he paid frequent visits there and on one occasion went up to preach a sermon at St. Mary's. He was fond of music and subscribed liberally to the local concerts and paid for a clarionet for the Beenham choir, for there was a village band for the Church music in those days. The band, however, may have fallen off in numbers, for eventually he provided an organ and altered the gallery to receive it. In the same year a Vestry was built at his suggestion and mainly at his expense, assisted by a subscription from the parish of £20. In 1814 he and his wife contributed towards the cost of Feasts at Beenham and Thatcham in celebration of the Peace, and the following year they subscribed to a fund raised in these parishes for the sufferers at Waterloo. He died in 1839. A tablet was put up to his memory in Beenham Church with this inscription: "To the memory of the Rev. John Bushnell, nine and twenty years Vicar of this Parish. Obit. 5th Sept., 1839. Ætat 53. Also Sarah his wife, who fell asleep April 4th, 1888, aged 90."

NOTE.—The Rev. W. D. Macray, D.D., writes: In the translation at page 20, April number, "A.S." does not stand for "Old Style," which is impossible in October; but for "Anno Salutaris." The translation should be "From this life, by the welcome exchange of another, being released from his body he departed" . . . "in the year of Salvation."

(To be continued.)

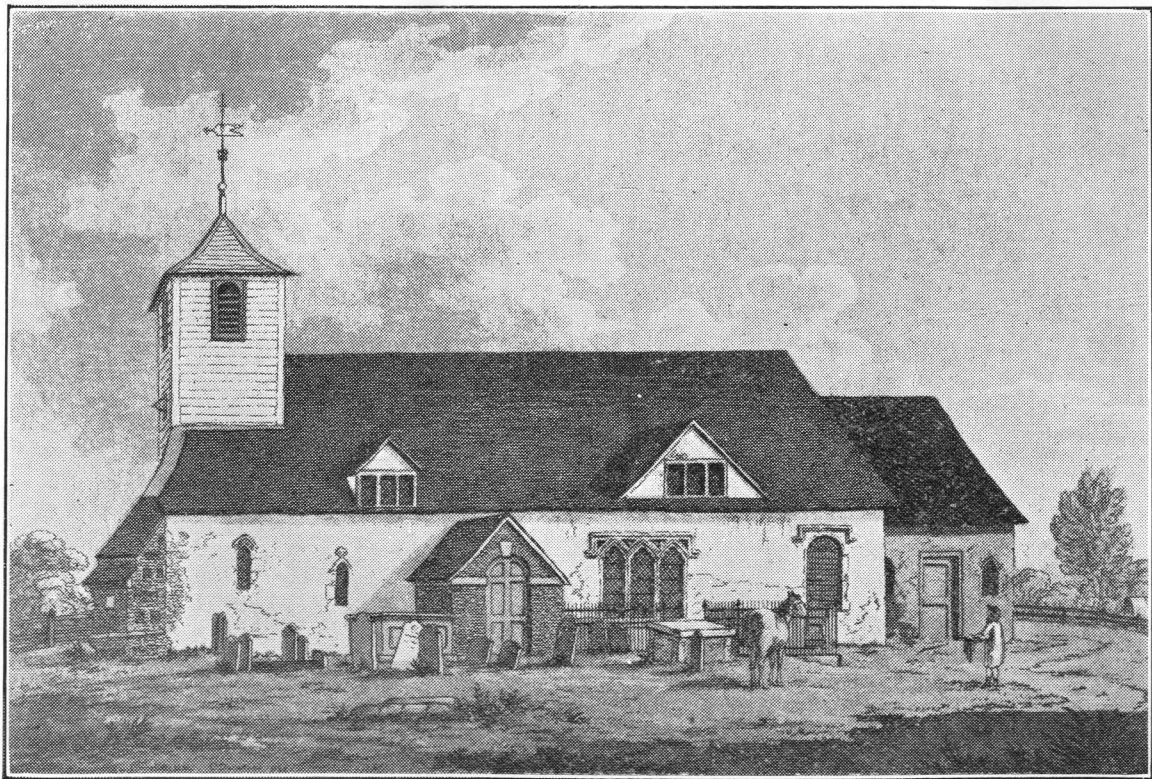
The Shiplake Virtuoso.

By Emily J. Climenson.

(Continued from page 28.)

This famous dog was on April 3rd, 1778, a subject of conversation at the "Literary Club," the dog was then offered for sale, *vide* Boswell's "Life of Johnson":—

"F" (said to be Lord Upper Ossory): "I have been looking



BEENHAM CHURCH.