

"Day of Aprill, in the Yeare of our Lord God

"MDXCV., and in the Yeare of his Age 69."

There are other monuments to the Hydes which are also mentioned.

Between the font and the tower arch is a very fine old oak chest (Fig. 15) with panelling on the front and sides. On the front are four divisions with quaint heads within lozenge shaped panels and foliage, and at each side is a vine branch with leaves and fruit. There are two similar divisions on each end. The date is early 17th century.

The tower arch (Fig. 16) is plain Norman semi-circular with half-round on the hoodmould, two plain recessed orders, chamfered abacus continued as a stringcourse to north and south walls, and plain jambs. There is a plain deeply splayed window on the lower stage of tower on the north, west and south sides.

(To be continued.)

Shakespeare in Berks, Bucks and Oxon.

By Henry E. Bannard.

WARWICKSHIRE as Shakespeare's home in his earliest and latest years, and London as the field in which his working life was spent, have, of course, a special interest in those Tercenary Celebrations of one who in all other respects is the common heritage of the human heart and intellect. There are, however, evidences of Shakespeare's travels in many of the counties of England, and among them are Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, in which counties his footsteps can be traced.

Shakespeare's movements in certain years can with a high degree of probability be traced by means of our knowledge of the year in which he left Stratford-on-Avon for London, and of the years in which visits were paid to certain towns by the company of actors of which he was a member.

Shakespeare appears to have gone to London in 1586, and tradition points to his journey having been made by the Oxford and High Wycombe route. He would enter Oxfordshire at a point close to those remarkable pre-historic remains, the Rollright Stones. Seven miles further on he would pass another ancient relic in the shape of the Hoar Stone at Enstone. The Church at Enstone to-day is much the same as when Shakespeare saw it. From there he would journey on through Kiddington to Woodstock, then a very prosperous glove-making borough, but of course with no great ducal estate of Blenheim to be the principal feature of the social life of the district. Another eight miles' trudge through the villages of Begbrooke, Yarnton and Wolvercote would bring him to Oxford. It is worth our while to pause and consider what parts of the Oxford we know now were in existence when Shakespeare passed through the city on his way to meet his unknown and glorious destiny. He would enter the city by Carfax after traversing the spot where not quite thirty years before Ridley and Latimer were burnt. He would see Carfax Church at the cross-roads, and hard by the Church was the Crown Inn, at which tradition asserts that Shakespeare several times lodged. Tradition also hints that the poet loved the inn-keeper's wife, Mistress Davenant, "not wisely but too well." There is no proof of this latter story, but there is pretty good evidence that the Crown was a favourite resting place of the poet's, and probably he first became acquainted with its comforts when, travel-worn with his journey from Stratford to seek his fortune, he reached Oxford. Christ Church, begun by the great Cardinal, and completed by the Sovereign who had broken him, would doubtless attract the admiration of the young traveller. In those days there were only three sides to the Great Quadrangle (the northern one not being finished till 1668). Nor was there a Tom Tower then. Neither was there a Sheldonian Theatre, or a Radcliffe Library, or an Ashmolean Museum. The ancient Divinity School was then already over a century old, and in the room above it was the library founded by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. It was in the year after Shakespeare's journey to London that Sir Thomas Bodley added the east wing of the library which thenceforth has become famous all the world over as the Bodleian. The colleges besides Christ Church which were then in existence were New College, Balliol, University, Queen's, Magdalen, All Souls, Brasenose, St. Mary's Hall, Oriel, Corpus Christi, Merton, St. John's, Trinity, Exeter, Jesus, Lincoln, and St. Edmund Hall.

The Churches of St. Peter's-in-the-East and St. Mary the Virgin would be as conspicuous then as they are now.

Leaving the city the poet would cross Magdalen Bridge and mount the hill to Headington, and on from there to Wheatley, crossing the little tributary Thame at Wheatley Bridge, and then on by Tetsworth and Stokenchurch into Buckinghamshire, passing through West Wycombe, High Wycombe, Loudwater, Holtspur Heath, Beaconsfield and Gerrard's Cross before emerging into Middlesex.

The next authentic evidence of a journey taken by Shakespeare is that of Lord Hunsdon's company of actors (to which he belonged) to Bristol in 1593. Indications of weight point to the extreme probability that Shakespeare was already a member of this company, though there is no documentary evidence of it earlier than December, 1594.

The journey to Bristol would involve the passage through a portion of South Bucks, namely, by Colnbrook, Slough and Taplow, and thence over the Thames at Maidenhead Bridge, passing right through the Royal County by way of Maidenhead, Reading, Newbury and Hungerford. In that year both "Richard II." and Richard III." were produced, and also "Titus Andronicus," and these then new plays would almost certainly be included in the repertoire performed by the company on this tour. It is probable also that the players would perform at most of the substantial towns through which they passed, and possibly also at some noblemen's houses en route.

It is not likely that the company returned by the same road as they came, for they were at Shrewsbury in the same year, and the natural thing would be for them to go thither by way of the Severn; and there seems some ground for a belief that their return to London was made by way of Stratford-on-Avon. If this indeed were so, the tradition that Shakespeare did not see his native town for eleven years after he left it for London may have to go by the board. It is interesting to speculate to what work Shakespeare was giving his great mind in the course of his various journeys.

In April, 1593, "Venus and Adonis" was published. As in May, 1594, "Lucrece" was published, and as in that year "The Merchant of Venice," "King John," and "The Comedy of Errors" were produced, it is reasonable to conclude that that poem and one or other of these two plays occupied his mind greatly during the journey of 1593.

In the following year the company was again along the Bath Road to go to Marlborough, a town which was also visited in 1597. This latter year was the one in which "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was produced by the Queen's command. This play contains a comical allusion to places along the Bath Road in Bucks and Berks. The reference is to Act IV., Scene V. of that farcical play, where Sir Hugh Evans is made to say to the Host of the Garter Inn at Windsor :

"Have a care of your entertainments ; there is a friend of mine come to town, tells me, there is three cousins Germans, that has cozened all the hosts of Reading, of Maidenhead, of Colebrook, of horses and money."

This passage has the apposite appearance of a topical illusion. One may well hazard the opinion that it did indeed refer to an incident which had then recently agitated and also amused the countryside along the Bath Road from Colnbrook to Reading.

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" reveals a certain intimacy of local knowledge of Windsor and its vicinity. Datchet and Eton, Frogmore and Old Windsor, the Garter Inn and Herne's Oak are all mentioned in that tone of confidence which implies familiarity.

In the Coventry journey of 1603 Shakespeare would travel by the old Roman road of Watling Street, and would traverse ten miles of North Buckinghamshire, passing through Little Brickhill, Fenny Stratford and Stony Stratford. From early days he would probably know something of the Watling Street, and in "Richard III.," produced in 1593, he shows a knowledge of distances in the vicinity of the Watling Street, the Archbishop of York, in Act III., Scene 4, being made to say of the young Princes :

"Last night I hear they lay at Northampton ;
At Stony Stratford will they be to-night."

The journey to Leicester also, in 1606, might take Shakespeare through the North Buckinghamshire town of Newport Pagnell and villages of Wavendon, Broughton, Lathbury and Stoke Goldington. The party would branch off from the Watling Street at Hockliffe.

Oxford was visited several times by the company, to wit in 1604, 1605, 1607, 1610 and 1613. In 1608, too, they went both to Coventry and Marlborough, and presumably travelled across country from the one to the other, passing on the way through Little Bourton, Banbury, Deddington, Kidlington Green and Oxford in Oxfordshire, and Abingdon, Steventon, West Hendred, East Lockinge, Farnborough, Great Shefford and Hungerford in Berkshire.