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An Architectural Account of the Churches of Great and Little Coxwell, Coleshill, Inglesham, Buscot and Eaton Hastings

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AS I have stated before, I am anxious, as far as lies in my power, to justify my honourable position of President of the Berkshire Archæological Society, by bringing to the notice of the members the architectural features of the majority of the churches in the county, and with the aid of the lantern to spend an hour in visiting selected groups in various parts of Berkshire. Last year we were in the eastern division. To-day I propose to deal with a series of churches, small but interesting, in the extreme western portion of the county, on the border of the Cotswold Hills between Faringdon, Highworth and Lechlade, on the Upper Thames.

Starting from Faringdon, if time permits, the fine church there should be first inspected. It was presented to Beaulieu Abbey, as part of its original endowment by King John, and the architectural details prove it to have been built just about that time, *viz.* the end of the twelfth century. It has unfortunately been too liberally restored, but still retains much interesting work of the transitional Norman period, notably the chancel, the tower arches, north and south doorways, and other details.

There are several monuments to the Untons and other distinguished members of Faringdon families.

Our first objective, rather over a mile from Faringdon, is the little church or chapel of St. Mary at Little Coxwell (Fig. 1). This is a hamlet in the parish of Faringdon, and its ecclesiastical history is bound up with that of the mother church. The chapel is small and of simple design (Fig. 2), consisting of nave with south porch, and chancel, and a bellcote on the east gable of the nave. It seems to be mainly of the transitional Norman period, the bellcote being added in the thirteenth century, and the windows being insertions of the later styles. It has been restored some years ago, the east window of the chancel, chancel roof, and a window on the north side of nave being new, and unfortunately the screen, which was in perfect condition in 1850, has been removed, and a portion of it incorporated in a gallery at the west end.

Taking up our position in the chancel (Fig. 3), we note the east window as being new in the Decorated style, having taken the place of a square-headed window of late date. On the north side is a large cinquefoiled niche of the Decorated period, and on the south a smaller niche with cinquefoiled canopy and within rectangular frame of fifteenth century date. The east window on the south side is of two lights of the Decorated period, with segmental-headed containing arch, while the west is a four-light (Fig. 4), square-headed, divided by a cross transom, and with the upper part separated into two twolight arched compartments. It is an elegant example of late fifteenth century date. There is a rounded trefoil-headed piscina in the south wall below the eastern of the two windows. The chancel arch (Fig. 5) is obtusely pointed transitional Norman, with grooved and chamfered hoodmould, plain order, and grooved and chamfered abacus, continued as a stringcourse to the north and south walls on the chancel side. On the nave side is a plain hoodmould. The piers are plain. On north of nave is a new window in the Decorated style. On the south is a three-light segmental-headed Perpendicular window, and to the west of the doorway a two-light of Decorated date. The west window (Fig. 6) has three trefoil-headed lancets within single containing arch, and with fluted moulding to arch and jambs. The cornice of the old chancel screen (Fig. 7), with rich carving of fruit and

flowers, is now carried along the top of a gallery at the west end. The nave roof (Fig. 8) is very good Decorated high-pitched with tie beams, chamfered and cinque-foiled arches to the principals, as at Ipsden in Oxfordshire. The font (Fig. 9) is a plain octagonal bowl on a slender stem, and is of late Decorated or early Perpendicular date. There is a small arched recess for the stoup by the south doorway. There is a very nice brass candelabra with the following inscription: 'Deo trino et Uni Richardus Peers Hujus Ecclesiæ Vicarius Humilissime Offert Ann. Dni. 1729.'

The north doorway (Fig. 10), now opening to modern vestry, is Norman, square-headed, with plain chamfered order to the head and jambs on the interior side, and a roll moulding along the head and down the jambs on the exterior side. The south doorway (Fig. 11) within a porch is fine late Norman, semi-circular headed, with chamfered hoodmould and eleven large oblong billets on the chamfer, roll on angle of the arch, carried through the abacus, and down the jambs to the ground. The abacus is grooved with hollow below, and is rounded off as a frame to the roll moulding. There are some votive crosses on the jambs. The outer arch of the porch is four centred Perpendicular, with grooved label on head terminations and two fluted orders to arch and jambs with hollow between. There is a small single light window on east side of porch. The three-light Perpendicular window on south of nave has a label terminating on large heads. The four-light Perpendicular window on south of chancel has the label terminating on a head and shield. The Decorated window also has a hoodmould above. The south chancel doorway (Fig. 12) is late Norman semi-circular headed, with grooved and chamfered hoodmould, arch, abacus, and jambs. The bellcote on the east gable of the nave has two plain arched divisions with quatrefoil above within a triangular pediment capped by a cross and is of the Early English period. There is a large buttress supporting the east gable of the roof, both on north and south sides. The church is built of stone, but the north, south and west walls of nave are coated with roughcast. The orientation of the chancel is to the north of that of the nave. The interior dimensions are as follows:—

Nave, 41 ft. by 15 ft. 10 in.

Chancel, 23 ft. by 15 ft. 10 in.

A drive or walk of about a mile will bring us to Great Coxwell. This is described as being in early times a royal demesne, and the manor was granted by King John to his new foundation of Beaulieu Abbey, which continued to hold it till the dissolution of the monastery, when it was granted to the Morys family, who had farmed the land under the Abbey. The splendid tithe barn (Fig. 13), remains as evidence of the abundant provision which had to be made for storing the produce of the monastic property in the district. The barn (Fig. 14), which belongs to the decorated period, is built of stone and has lofty entrances at one end (modern), and to the projecting transepts on either side, with well-moulded arches to the doorways. The windows are simply narrow oblong slits, and there are numerous small square holes, query for pigeons or ventilation. There are buttresses at intervals, and the roofs are high pitched. There are the lower portions of crosses on the gables. Within, the barn is divided by upright timbers (Fig. 15) supporting the tie beams into a nave and aisles, and the interior view is very grand and impressive. The dimensions are given in Murray's Guide as $152\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $38\frac{1}{2}$ ft. interior measurement; it rises 51 ft. to the ridge, and has walls 4 ft. thick. The same authority informs us that 'on the east is a fine porch with a tallat in which the monks are said to have slept at harvest time. The floor is beaten mud, and the roof heavy Stonesfield slate. Close to it is an Elizabethan farmhouse.'

Some distance away is the Parish Church of St. Giles' (Fig. 16), a very interesting edifice in the Early English style. Some windows have been inserted during the Decorated period, and the tower was added late in the fifteenth century. It consists of a west tower (Fig. 17) with north porch and chancel. It is built of stone and probably was constructed and restored from time to time under the supervision of the monks of Beaulieu, who were the Patrons of the Living. Starting our survey in the interior of the chancel, we first notice the east window (Fig. 18), composed of three lofty trefoil-headed lancets within a containing arch with chamfered head. There is a large plain niche on either side, and below a trefoil ogee-headed recess, concealed by the modern reredos. On the north side are two widely splayed lancets, and on the south a two-light late Decorated window with sixfoil in the head. There is a plain

sedile in the sill of the window, and to the east an elegant piscina with cinquefoiled canopy, stone shelf and quatrefoil basin. On the south side near the west end is a plain lancet brought down to form a lowside window. The lower part is not glazed, and has iron bars, protected by a modern shutter. There is a seat in the splay of the window. The roof is wagon shaped. There was a stone bench on each side of the chancel returned at the west end, but this has disappeared. The chancel arch (Fig. 19) is late Early English or Decorated, with two chamfered orders, the outer continued down the jambs to the ground, the inner supported on shafts, terminating on corbels, that on the north on a small head.

In the nave (Fig. 20) are two lancet windows on the north side. On the south is a two-light segmental-headed Perpendicular window, then a three-light squareheaded window probably of the same date, and then to the west of the former doorway a two light Decorated window (Fig. 21), with very nice foliated containing arch, terminating on heads. There are some small fragments of old glass. At the west end on this side is a modern three-light window to the gallery. The nave roof is wagon-shaped and with tie beams. The tower arch is Perpendicular with hoodmould and two fluted orders. The west window is similar to the east with three trefoil headed lancets within a single containing arch. There are semi-circular heads to the north and south doorways on the interior side. The font has large plain octagonal bowl and stem. The doorways to the rood loft staircase, the upper one blocked up, remain on the south side of the chancel arch. On the floor are two brasses (Fig. 22), (1) of a civilian with long robe, large purse, and the hands clasped on the breast. Below him are two sons, and facing them one daughter, and the inscription—

‘ Here lieth Willm Morys sūtime fermer of Cokyswell
on whose soule Ihu have mercy. amen.’

(2) of a lady with long robe, kerchief round her head, hands clasped on breast, and the following inscription—

‘ Here lieth Johane the wyf of Willm Morys
on whole soule ihu have mercy, amen.’

This William Morys was tenant to the monks of Beaulieu, and after the dissolution of the Abbey, received a grant of the Manor. The date of the brasses is about 1500.

The north doorway (Fig. 23) within a porch is plain Early English, with the half-round on the hoodmould, and chamfered arch and jambs. The door is ancient, probably fifteenth century, with rich panelling, unfortunately much weatherworn. The seat on either side of the porch still remains. The outer arch of the porch (Fig. 24) is of very massive timber, and mainly of the fifteenth century. There is a pretty little sanctus bell-cote on the east gable of the nave. There is a small buttress at the west end on south side and on each side of the nave near the east end. South doorway blocked up and with modern window inserted. On south side of nave is a projection to the rood loft staircase, with tiny high side window in the adjoining wall. The Perpendicular and Decorated windows have plain external hoodmoulds, that above the east window being semi-circular. The lower part of the lowside window on south side of chancel is still unglazed. The lancets on north of nave are quite plain, the Early English stringcourse still remains on this side.

The tower (Fig. 25) is rather low, but a good specimen of the Perpendicular style. It is embattled with angle pinnacles, and is divided by stringcourses into four stages. In a cornice below the battlements are some good gargoyle heads, and in the upper stage two-light belfry windows with square labels. There is a small single light in the west and north walls of the middle stage, and in addition on the north side a niche for an image with square label above. The Early English west window has a Perpendicular label above. There are five bells of eighteenth century date.

The interior dimensions are as follow:—

Tower, 13 ft. 8 in. by 11 ft. 10 in.

Nave, 52 ft. 10 in. by 16 ft.

Chancel, 25 ft. 6 in. by 13 ft. 6 in.

Continuing our round we arrive in about two miles at Coleshill, a very pretty village on the extreme west of the county, which is separated from Wiltshire by the little river Cole. Part of the parish is in Wiltshire. In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the family of De Coleshill was closely allied to the Achards of Sparsholt and Aldermaston, and some of the Achards appear to have styled themselves 'de Coleshull.' Mr.

W. Money, F.S.A., in his paper on Aldermaston in Vol. IV, p. 125 of the 'Transactions of the Newbury and District Field Club,' gives the following details: 'This Robert Achard granted the reversion in fee of the manor of Aldermaston to Richard de Coleshull, as is shown by an Inquisition Post Mortem taken on his death in 1296. Another Robert Achard then came into possession of the manor. He is described in Letters Patent for founding a Chantry at Sparsholt in 1336, as a son of Elyas de Coleshull, and Margaret his wife, as grandson of Richard de Coleshull, and brother of Peter de Coleshull, sometime Rector of Sparsholt, and to Richard de Coleshull, who married one Agnes; but the license only mentions his predecessor, Robert de Achard, as "sometime Lord of Sparsholt." After the death of his son Peter, the estates came to the Delamares by the marriage of Thomas de la Mare to the only daughter of Robert and Margaret Achard.'

Lysons informs us that the Manor of Coleshill was given to the Priory of Bonnes-Hommes at Edington, in Wiltshire, by the founder, William de Edindon, Bishop of Winchester. After the Reformation it was granted to the Seymours, and in 1626 was purchased by Sir Henry Pratt, Alderman of London, who was created a baronet in 1641. His only son George married Margaret, a daughter of Sir Humphrey Forster, of Aldermaston, but his only sister, becoming heir, brought Colehill by marriage to the Pleydells, who had possessed an estate in the parish as early as the time of Edward I. The property came to the Earl of Radnor by the marriage of one of the earls with the heiress of the Pleydells, and now belongs to the Pleydell Bouveries. Coleshill House is a very fine seventeenth century structure, and was one of the last houses to be designed by Inigo Jones. It is of stone, and commands a very fine view of the Vale of the White Horse. The church (Fig. 26), dedicated to All Saints, consists of a west tower, nave, aisles, with south porch and chancel. It was beautified in the seventeenth century, and most of the early architectural features destroyed. The chancel (Fig. 27) has received special treatment, and is blocked up by large monuments of Sir Henry Pratt, and early members of the Pleydell and Bouverie families. The east window is a quatrefoil of the seventeenth century date, but inserted in it is some beautiful glass of fifteenth century date, bought at Angers in France

by Jacob, the second Earl of Radnor, and placed here in 1787. It represents the Nativity and Adoration of the Shepherds. The blessed Virgin with golden hair, in red dress and blue cloak, blue kerchief over her head, and golden nimbus, is kneeling and adoring the Infant Christ lying within a golden halo on the ground. Behind Him is Joseph with white hair and beard, in blue robe, red cloak, and with flat cap and nimbus, bending over and pointing with his finger. Behind him is the ox. At the back and behind the Virgin are four shepherds much mutilated. In the centre is a pillar, and above a cloud with bright rays coming from it. On the outside on either side are parts of the kneeling figures of the gentleman and lady, the donors of the window. The colouring is very rich, but the subject is spoiled by the attempt to squeeze it into this incongruous enclosure.

The chancel arch (Fig. 28) has hoodmould and two plain orders on debased corbels. On north of nave are two and a half arches, segmental-headed, of Decorated date, with two chamfered orders on two circular columns with good capitals. The eastern arch terminates on shaft in east wall above a small rounded trefoil-headed piscina, with mutilated projecting octagonal basin. The western arch of the arcade dies into the west wall. There are two three-light Perpendicular windows in north wall of north aisle. On south of nave are two large pointed arches with two chamfered orders, resting on central columns attached to a plain pier with grooved and chamfered abacus, and foliage on the capital. The east respond is also attached to a pier on the east side, and has similar foliage. The arches are of the Early English period; the piers seem to be late Norman. The south aisle is divided up and modernised. The font is plain cup-shaped Norman on modern base. The tower arch is Perpendicular with two orders, continued without impost to the ground. The angle brackets and part of the stone-groined ceiling still remain. Within the sill of the west window are collected various fragments, apparently portions of the groining. The west window is Perpendicular of three lights. By the south doorway in the interior of the church is a trefoil-headed recess for the stoup, with mutilated bowl. In the east wall of the south chapel is a mutilated angel holding a shield with a lion rampant impaling a bend ermine between two crows

and a chief chequy of the fifteenth or sixteenth century date. There is also part of a figure in the west wall.

The south doorway (Fig. 29) within a porch is fine Early English, with trefoil-headed arch, having an undercut hood-mould terminating on heads, and two chamfered orders without imposts to the ground. The soffit of the inner order of the arch rests on a billet on either side. There is a stone bench on each side of the porch, and under it are collected numerous sculptured fragments, Tudor roses, fan tracery, a hand holding a rose, and part of an inscription, probably from a monument of date about 1500. The outer arch (Fig. 30) of the porch is segmental-headed, with two chamfered orders, the outer continued to the ground, the inner dying into the jambs. There is a parvise above, which was adapted by the Earl of Radnor, who became the owner of the property, as the family pew, and thrown into the interior of the Church. On the parapet on the south aisle is a very curious gargoyle, with a representation of a man holding a barrel to his ear. The tower (Fig. 31) is of stone, and a good specimen of Perpendicular work of the Gloucestershire type. It is in three stages, embattled, with pinnacles at the angles and in the centre of each face. On the cornice below are numerous heads. There are two-light belfry windows, the lower portion filled in with stone, pierced with a series of quatrefoils, and with an undercut label above. There is a small single-light in the middle stage. The west doorway (Fig. 32) is Perpendicular within a rectangular frame, having an angel holding a shield at the centre and each of the terminations. There are quatrefoils in the spandrels. Angle buttresses support the tower, and on the south side is an octagonal turret carried up to the middle stage. It has a small quatrefoil upper opening, and two plain slits below. There are five bells dated 1708. In the churchyard is preserved part of an ancient font. There is also the shaft and base of the churchyard cross.

The dimensions of the church are as follows:—

Tower, 13 ft. 9 in. by 11 ft. 2 in.

Nave, 41 ft. 8 in. by 14 ft. 4 in.

North aisle, 39 ft. 3 in. by 8 ft.

South aisle, 29 ft. 11 in. by 8 ft. 3 in.

Chancel, 25 ft. by 14 ft. 8 in.

(To be continued.)