

## New Light on Mapledurham Church.

BY THE REVEREND A. H. COOKE, Sc.D.

THERE has lately come into my possession a picture of Mapledurham Church, a sketch worked out in sepia, measuring 9in. by 7in., and of considerable artistic merit. It is signed "M. W. Burt, 1836," and was given me by Mr. Henry FitzClarence, younger son of the Reverend Augustus FitzClarence, Vicar of Mapledurham, 1829-1854. The picture shows the Church as seen from the west, and enables us to realise what the Church was like, as far as its exterior is concerned, before the restoration undertaken by Mr. Coleridge in 1862-63.

The picture shows very distinctly the door which was known to have existed on the western side of the tower (*Early History of Mapledurham*, p. 138), and the window above it, no record of which had previously come down to us. The door is narrow, and arched at the top. The window is a poor two-light oblong, apparently about 8 or 9 feet high, and certainly not contemporary with the late-perpendicular windows of the Church. A path is shown, leading up to the door, and branching off from the main churchyard path immediately inside the gate.

Mr. Coleridge abolished the door, and greatly enlarged the window in order to gain light for the Church. He also took down the gallery erected in 1722, which covered the belfry arch, and he removed the wooden stairs which gave access to the gallery from the belfry.

A further point of interest is raised by the picture—the position of the porch. We know that Mr. Coleridge built the present new porch, abutting on the north-west angle of the building, but it was always supposed that he built his new porch on the site of the old one. The picture, however, shows the old porch at least 6 feet further eastward, with a prominent buttress, which no longer exists, supporting the above-mentioned north-west angle. Careful consideration seems to show that the picture is correct. Mr. Coleridge, pursuing his plan of introducing more light into the Church, conceived the idea of putting a new window in the north wall of the nave. But there

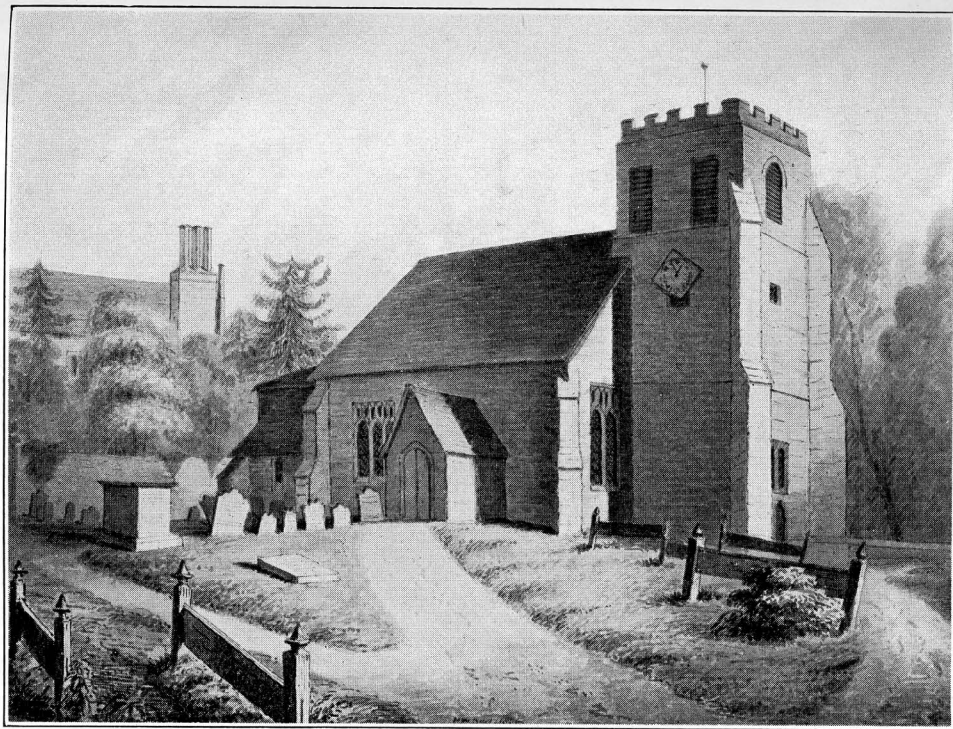
was no room to do this between the porch and the fine late-perpendicular window, so he moved the porch several feet further westward, and thus obtained the room he wanted. An examination of the flints and mortar which were used to fill up the old door of the porch confirms this view. The line where they begin can be clearly distinguished on the wall, and they correspond with the flints and mortar used to fill up the western door in the tower. Another buttress, at the north-east angle, corresponding to the buttress which was removed, still exists.

It may be added that one's impression of the accuracy of the picture is confirmed by its representation of the line of Butler tombs close to the porch itself. Each tombstone is sketched with absolute correspondence to its present position and dimensions.

The recent removal of the ivy from the exterior of the Bardolf Chapel, on the south side of the Church, has led to some unexpected discoveries. The three bays between the four supporting buttresses are of unequal width, measuring respectively 18ft. 7in., 16ft. 1in., and 16ft. 8in., starting from the west. Between buttresses 3 and 4 there now appear (1) a large mural tablet, (2) a blocked up window ; (3) a blocked up door.

The tablet, to the memory of Mary, wife of Charles Smith, a former estate bailiff, date 1786, is of no special interest. The blocked up window corresponds exactly, in height and width, with the existing late perpendicular window in the bay next westward, and must have added greatly to the beauty of the chapel. The bricks employed to block it up vary in size, the lower bricks being of the old 9in.  $\times$  3in. type, as in the surviving fragment of the Bardolf Manor House, while the upper bricks are of a more modern type.

The door is blocked up with bricks of this later form. It measures 6ft.  $\times$  3ft., and the whole framework is in situ. It is evidently contemporary with the building itself (1382-1395), and probably served as a little priest's door for entry on the south side. It was probably closed when the later and rather larger Tudor door, further west, was constructed. Possibly this



MAPLEDURHAM CHURCH IN 1836.

happened when the main body of the Church passed to the reformed Church of England.

The blocked up window gives scope for further conjecture. It may have been found too near the altar of the chapel, which was already well lighted by the window above it. Or, when the Blounts began to fill the chapel with hatchments and monuments, the need of more wall space may have been felt. This would account for the filling in of the wall inside. The tracery and mullion probably survive, concealed behind the bricks.

It is noticeable that the buttress immediately adjacent to the little door is faced with brick, while the other three are entirely of flint and stone. It is possible that it had decayed, and was taken down and rebuilt when the door was closed.