

Mural Paintings in Berkshire Churches.

PART II.

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AVINGTON.

ON the fine twelfth century chancel arch are slight remains of contemporary colour decoration consisting of a lozenge pattern in red on the south respond and some six-rayed stars on the soffit of the outer order of the arch on the east side. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XVI (1910), 7.)

BAULKING.

At the restoration of this church in the latter part of the nineteenth century much mural painting was discovered, of which some portion was permitted to remain. It is found on the north wall of the nave and is of two periods.

To the west of the doorway is a series of subjects in irregularly framed compartments dating from the end of the thirteenth century, but somewhat difficult to decipher in spite of careful cleaning and treatment in 1933. They probably form part of a Nativity series, as at Ashampstead, though much less accomplished work. The first scene from the west probably depicted the Annunciation and a standing figure is most likely intended for St. Gabriel. In the next scene the heads of an ox and ass can be made out as well as indications of other figures, which suggest the Nativity. Finally we have a scene with a couch in the centre and several figures dimly discerned, which make it probable that the Visit of the Magi is intended. Above are slight traces of another series too fragmentary to decipher.

To the east of the door there has been a large subject contained within an ornamental border and of fifteenth century date. Unfortunately an XVIII. C. mural tablet has been placed right in the middle of the painting. The form of a huge monster with a long tail can be made out and there are other indications above which may be the trappings of a horse. This suggests that the subject was St. George. It is quite likely that the space over the north door was occupied by a painting of St. Christopher, but of this there are no signs at present. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XX (1914), 36.)

BLEWBURY.

On either side of the arch from the north transept to the crossing are remains of masonry pattern in red with quatrefoiled flowers in the compartments, probably dating from the latter part of the thirteenth century.



Photo: F. M. Underhill, 1933.

PLATE III.

Enborne. The Annunciation.

BOXFORD.

Over the modern chancel arch are remains of a painting of the Royal Arms of seventeenth century date, which appears to have been superimposed on earlier work, of which there are slight and indeterminate indications visible, including a crescent in red. There are seventeenth century texts on the south wall of the nave. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XVI (1910), 3.)

BUCKLAND.

On the west wall of the north transept are slight remains of colour decorations in red dating from the thirteenth century. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XII (1907) 102.)

ENBORNE.

At the east end of the north wall of the chancel is a large and striking representation of the Annunciation dating from the first half of the fourteenth century. (*Plate No. III*). The work exhibits much artistic merit and it is, moreover, comparatively well preserved. During the cleaning of the picture in 1934 slight indications of a later painting, which had been superimposed, were found. It is executed in red outline on a white ground with no attempt at shading, or painting in. On the right is the Blessed Virgin in a standing posture with extended hands. Opposite is the Archangel, an imposing figure with flowing draperies and large feathery wings, with his right hand raised in greeting and holding in his left a scroll which, no doubt, bore originally the words of the angelic salutation as recorded in the Scriptures. Between the two figures, is the traditional lily pot. The pose of the figures and the manipulation of the draperies are most skilfully managed. This is certainly one of the best surviving wall paintings in Berkshire. No further remains of painting survive in the church and it is impossible to say whether this Annunciation was an isolated subject, or part of an extensive scheme of colour decoration.

FINCHAMPSTEAD.

Over the chancel arch are remains of two schemes of colour decoration, the earlier dating from about the beginning of the thirteenth century, or even possibly rather earlier, and the later from the fifteenth century. The former consists of a broad band of bold scroll pattern in red and white on a cream ground with indications of other details below, which have been mutilated by the insertion of the present chancel arch in the fifteenth century. The latter scheme, which is partially superimposed on the earlier work, consists of a foliage pattern in red, which probably served as a background to the Rood. No indication of figure painting is now visible. There are seventeenth century panels with the

Lord's Prayer and Creed on the south wall of the nave and a text of the same period on the north wall. Recently two late sixteenth century panels were discovered in the north chapel. They contain texts in black letter within elaborate scroll borders of pleasing design.

HAMPSTEAD NORRIS.

During the drastic "restoration" to which this church was subjected in Victorian times several wall paintings came to light, but all were destroyed except a large and notable one on the south side of the nave dating from the latter part of the thirteenth century. The subject is the Blessed Virgin and Holy Child, and, though sadly mutilated, it is still possible to recognise the master hand in its execution. In its original state this picture must have been of outstanding beauty and delicacy. Beneath a trefoil headed arch is a seated and almost life-sized figure of Our Lady bending over her Divine Son, who lies in her lap. The Virgin's robe is outlined in red and the background is of a deep red, against which the figure must have stood out in a very striking manner. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XXI (1915), 32.)

HATFORD.

Here a new church was erected in 1873, but fortunately the Victorian vandals in this case did not destroy completely its venerable predecessor, contenting themselves with unroofing the nave and leaving the chancel more or less intact. In this state the fabric still remains, though the west end of the nave has been blocked by a large and hideous mausoleum. The church, which consists of chancel and nave only, dates mainly from the second half of the twelfth century with some later windows inserted.

Within living memory there were considerable remains of mural painting in existence, including the Annunciation and the Crucifixion (*Reliquary*, VII (new series), 147). Practically all that remains now is some red colour on the soffit of the twelfth century chancel arch. There is, or was until recently, a slight indication of colour on the west wall of the nave. (*Berks, Bucks. and Oxon. Arch. Journ.* XX (1915), 101.)

WEST HENDRED.

When this interesting and unspoilt church was carefully restored some years ago by the late Mr. P. M. Johnston, F.S.A., remains of mural paintings were discovered, all of Post-Reformation date with the exception of two dissimilar consecration crosses in the aisles. That in the south aisle is a cross patee of bluish green painted on the stone and contained within a circle of the same colour. The other is a Maltese cross in red on a cream ground without any circle. The former has a hole in the centre for fixing a pricket to hold a candle, which would be lighted at the dedication and on each

succeeding anniversary. There are remains of texts over the chancel arch and north arcade as well as in the north aisle. Some red colour over the chancel arch may be medieval.

KINGSTON LISLE.

Many years ago a very notable series of fourteenth century mural paintings was discovered in the chancel and in 1935 these were carefully cleaned and treated. The paintings exhibit interesting details coupled with a masterly technique, which combine to place them among the most important survivals of medieval art in Berkshire. They would appear to date from the third quarter of the fourteenth century. On the splays of the east window are life-sized figures of St. Peter and St. Paul with their respective emblems of keys and sword. St. Peter also holds what would appear to be a ship—the symbol of the Church, often designated the Bark of Peter. The figures stand on a cream ground with a diaper of red roses and are splendid examples of one of the best periods of medieval art, executed with much character and beauty of outline and colour. They have considerable affinity with some contemporary paintings in the Gloucestershire church of Ampney Crucis, near Cirencester. On the east wall, north and south of the window, are traces of subjects too imperfect to decipher, but probably representing censuring angels.

At the east end of the north wall and extending to the splay of the adjacent window are scenes from the story of St. John Baptist, in whose honour the church is dedicated. On the right are two scenes, one above the other. The upper depicts Herod's feast. In the centre the King is seated at a table, on which are several dishes. On his right is Herodias and on his left another figure partly obliterated. In front of the table is Salome apparently in the act of performing a somersault; the body is bent almost double causing a most grotesque effect. This subject like the others of the series is executed almost entirely in black outline with the exception of the food on the table and Herod's hair, which are both red. Below is shown the beheading of St. John. On the left is the executioner with uplifted sword and the headless and crumpled figure of the Saint in a red robe beside him. On the right splay of the adjacent window is the crowned figure of Herodias receiving the Saint's head from another person. At the apex of the splay is the head of Christ with a cruciform nimbus. These scenes are executed on rather a small scale and may well have been borrowed from some miniatures of the period. On the north wall of the nave is the Lord's Prayer in an ornamental frame of seventeenth century date.

(To be continued.)