

## Church Building and Restoration in North Berkshire in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

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### I.

**D**URING the 18th century several churches in North Berkshire were pulled down and rebuilt; others were partly rebuilt or added to. Except in the case of St. Peter's, Wallingford, which was ruined in the Civil War, we do not know whether these rebuildings were justified; and we can only guess at the architectural value of what has thus been lost.\* In those days, when a church "went to decay," it was found easier to pull it down and rebuild it in the style of the period than to attempt to restore it. Those responsible for the work generally took care, however, to replace in the new churches some at least of the inscriptions from the old; these inscriptions sometimes give us an indication of the age of the original church; but very few of the other fittings have survived.

No doubt the 17th century was not a favourable time for church-building in some districts, and the only work of this period on anything like a large scale is at Shrivenham. Even when a church was badly damaged in the Civil War, it was not always repaired in the same century, if at all. St. Peter's, Wallingford, was not rebuilt till more than a hundred years after its destruction. Radley church, which was partially ruined in 1643, was not put into proper repair till 1670; though at Sutton Courtenay, where an explosion took place about the same time, work was taken in hand by 1655.<sup>1</sup> At Faringdon the spire and south transept were destroyed in 1645; the transept was not rebuilt till 1853, and the spire has never been replaced.

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\* The notices of some churches in J. H. Parker's *Ecclesiastical Topography* (written before the 'restoration' era), are very brief.

<sup>1</sup> W. Bradbrooke: "The Church during the Commonwealth." *B.A.J.* XXXVIII. 29.

When we come to the 18th century, it is almost a matter for wonder that any church-building was done at all. It is probable that the deplorable state of a certain church visited by Bishop Horne in 1787 was neither exaggerated nor yet absolutely typical of the age ; but it indicates a great apathy and lack of interest that were only too general. "The churchyard itself," he says, " was low and wet ; a broken gate the entrance ; a few small wooden tombs and an old yew tree the only ornaments. The inside of the church answered the out-side ; the walls green with damp : a few broken benches, with pieces of mats, dirty, and very ragged ; the stairs to the pulpit half worn away ; the communion table stood on three legs ; the rails worm-eaten, and half gone."<sup>2</sup> This is contrasted with " a gentleman's seat, which was laid out with all the elegance that could be bestowed upon the house and grounds. The churchyard joined to the park." On the other hand, it is a matter for some thankfulness that the 18th century was not swept by the wave of well-meant but disastrous restoration that came in the next century, and drew from Thomas Hardy the prayer

From restorations of Thy fane,  
From levellings of Thy sword,  
From zealous churchmen's pick and plane,  
Deliver us, good Lord.

Had this happened in the 18th century, the greater part of what was old and interesting would have vanished, and our villages would now present an array of those featureless buildings which, when few and isolated can be tolerated, and can even arouse our interest. Pusey church, for example, one of the best of the early 18th century churches, is the only one of that period in its neighbourhood ; but if the whole of the Vale of White Horse was full of similar buildings, how great would the loss be, both aesthetically and to the archaeologist. Of course a church built two hundred years ago has been to a certain degree mellowed by time, and has become, through long familiarity, more or less harmonised with its surroundings, unsuitable though the style

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<sup>2</sup> *Olla Podrida.*

may be. But what can be said for the new church at Hatford, built about 1890, in no style at all? Thankful indeed we are that the old church was spared.

#### BUCKLAND : ST. MARY.

Though the nave and other features of this church are Norman, it was the scene of an unhappy experiment in 1787—a date carved outside the S. transept—when the tracery of all the windows was cut out and replaced by straight mullions reaching to the tops of the windows. This alteration, together with the debased Perpendicular tower, completely spoils what would otherwise have been an impressive building.

#### SOUTH HINKSEY.

The chancel of this church was rebuilt in the first half of the 18th century, and is typical of the period, with a single round-headed east window. The corners show typical 18th century "long and short" work, which, though quite different, might be mistaken by the unwary for Saxon "long and short."

#### KINGSTON BAGPUIZE.

Lysons say that the church here "has been lately rebuilt: it is a small neat structure." <sup>3</sup>Some monuments of the Fettiplace and Blandy families, of the 18th century, were preserved from the old church. Otherwise it is entirely without interest.

#### KINGSTON LISLE : ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

The existing church is ancient, containing work of all periods from Norman upwards, as well as some 14th century frescoes showing the story of St. John and Herodias, discovered in 1883. It is mentioned here to remove any misapprehension that might arise from Lysons' statement about the chapel at Fawler: "it has been many years gone to decay, and a chapel at Kingston Lisle has been built in lieu of it."<sup>4</sup>

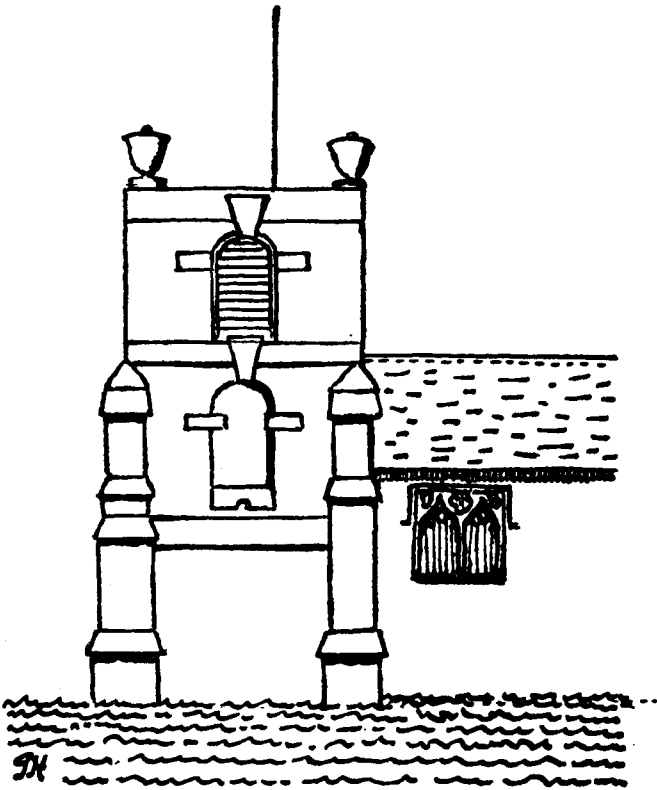
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<sup>3</sup> *Berks.* 1813, p. 307.

<sup>4</sup> *Berks.* p. 371.

LONGCOT : ST. MARY THE VIRGIN.

This church, which contains Early English and Perpendicular work, has a most unsuitable early 18th century tower, with large round-headed windows on the two upper storeys, and at the top, a large urn-like ornament at each corner. This tower was built in 1772.



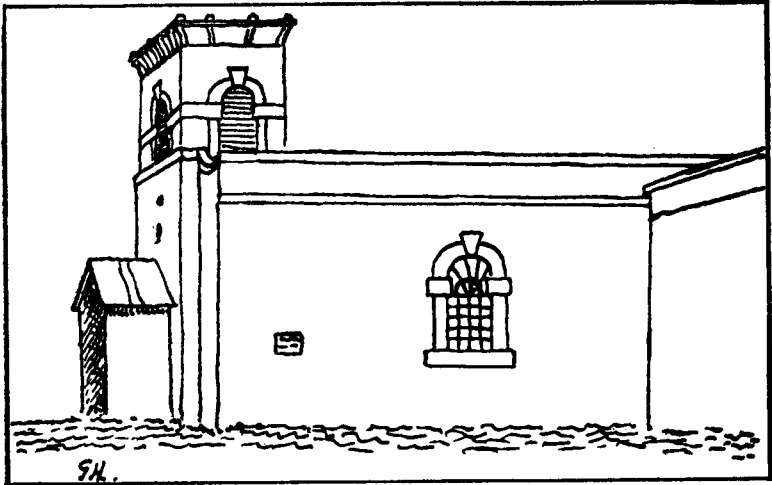
LONGCOT : 1722.

## PUSEY : ALL SAINTS.

This is much the most pleasing of the 18th century churches of Berkshire, and while it is not without a certain charm of its own, more care seems to have been taken of the monuments in the old church than was usual at that time. It is a plain cruciform building with two transepts, and a small square bell-cote with round-headed windows and a cornice. It was built about 1720 by John Allen, who on succeeding in 1710 to the estate of his uncle Charles Pusey, assumed the surname of Pusey. There has been a certain amount of discussion as to whether the old church stood on the same site ; the Rev. J. H. Maude (who was Vicar twenty years ago) contended that it occupied a different site which is now unknown. However, an alter-tomb in the present churchyard earlier in date than the date of the present church, should be decisive, and shows that the church-yard has not been changed ; from this we may infer that the church also is on the original site.

(2) built into the outside of the south wall of the chancel is a plain slab inscribed :

WILLIAM            WHITE  
 GOD    THAT    SENT  
 HIM INTO THE WORLD  
 MAY THE 21ST 1651  
 SAID MAY THE 10TH  
 1655    RETVRN THOV  
 SONNE    OF    SORIE  
 MAN. PSAL. 90. 3.



PUSEY CHURCH

(About 1720).

SHRIVENHAM : ST. MARY MAGDALENE.

This church, which Lysons describes as " a large and handsome structure,"<sup>5</sup> is debased 17th century, built probably during the first half of that century. Of the earlier church there remain an hexagonal font standing on a round base raised on three steps (Transitional), the Norman buttress in the west wall of the Norman base of the wall, and the central tower (Perpendicular). The windows of the church are mostly square-headed with two lights divided by a plain mullion, which do not give the same bad impression as at Buckland, where the windows are pointed, not square. The effect, however, is not particularly pleasing.

<sup>5</sup> Berks, p. 366.

## WALLINGFORD : ST. PETER.

This church was ruined in 1646 during the siege of the town by Sir Thomas Fairfax, and lay deserted for more than a hundred years, till it was rebuilt through the exertions of Sir William Blackstone, the great lawyer, who was Recorder of Wallingford about 1760. The body of the church was finished in 1769, and the spire, built at Blackstone's expense, in 1777. The spire rises from an open turret formed of pointed arches. The following monuments existed in the original church :

Sir Michael Molins, *d.* 1615.

Elizabeth, wife of Sir Barentyne Molins, *d.* 1622.

The James family.<sup>6</sup>

## WOOLSTONE : ALL SAINTS.

Though the greater part of this church is old, including two Norman doors, and an early English lead font on a Norman base, the east end was rebuilt in 1760, happily without undue damage, or removal of the Decorated chancel windows.

## II.

In the 18th century, side by side with rebuilding, went the destruction of churches. Sometimes a church was pulled down, and no attempt made to replace it ; sometimes a church that had gone to ruin was allowed to fall down. Although very little is known of the history of such churches, and nothing of their appearance, the following list is a first step towards the investigation of their history.

BAYWORTH in Sunningwell " had a chapel of ease, now gone to decay : it was much resorted to for private marriages before the Marriage Act."<sup>7</sup>

CHILSWELL in Cumnor. The *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica* (Vol. XIII) speaks of a chapel which once existed here.

<sup>6</sup> Capt. Symonds' MSS.

<sup>7</sup> Lysons, p. 383.

FARINGDON. Leland mentions a chapel of the Holy Trinity in All Saints' churchyard : it had vanished by 1800.

FAWLER in Kingston Lisle : a chapel of St. James.<sup>8</sup>

HAGBOURNE.

KENNINGTON, formerly in Radley and Sunningwell. The chapel here "fell down not many years ago."<sup>9</sup> There is now a modern church.

SEACOURT in Wytham. "There are no remains" of the free chapel here.<sup>10</sup>

TUBNEY. "The church has long ago been destroyed : not a stone of it remains : the site of the churchyard is in a field, not far from Appleton. On the induction of a rector, divine service is performed in the open air."<sup>11</sup> A modern church has been built here.

WATCHFIELD in Shrivenham. The chapel here was pulled down about 1770 ; a modern church has been built.

### III.

The 19th century was an era of "restoration" when untold damage was done to churches all over the country in the way of removal of ancient fittings and actual parts of the fabric, often without any justification at all. One of the most glaring examples of this wanton destruction is the "restoration" of Salisbury Cathedral at the end of the 18th century by Wyatt, who when he was, in the phrase of an accomplished ecclesiologist, "let loose" there, "'restored' it to what he considered was its state at the end of the 13th century."<sup>12</sup> Wyatt and his kind set an example which was followed by greater as well as by lesser architects for a century afterwards ; one of these, the Royal Academician Street, did a good deal of harm in Berkshire. The examples which follow are not exhaustive, but show the lengths to which "restorers" went, and some of the damage they did.

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<sup>8</sup> Lysons, p. 371.

<sup>9</sup> Lysons, p. 383.

<sup>10</sup> Lysons, p. 439.

<sup>11</sup> Lysons, p. 389.

<sup>12</sup> J. Tavenor-Perry in *The Antiquary*, 1915, LI. 330.



I have not included Fyfield, because the restoration here was made necessary by the disastrous fire of Oct. 26th, 1893 ; and the work was very carefully done.

APPLEFORD : SS. PETER AND PAUL.

This church has been rebuilt, but among the old features left are Norman north and south doors, and a blocked arch outside the north wall ; a Transitional or Early English font ; an Early English lancet in the vestry ; and a blocked priest's door.

APPLETON : ST. LAURENCE.

The greater part of the church is drastically restored Transitional work ; among the few remains of old work are the Norman font, the Perpendicular tower, and a stoup and niche in the south porch.

ARDINGTON : HOLY TRINITY.

This church was restored in 1867, and again, drastically and badly, with a good deal of rebuilding, in 1887, so that it is little more than a modern building with portions of old work. The tower, spire, and side chapels (all rebuilt) were originally Early English ; of the same period are the north door and porch, south arcade, and chancel. A bay was added to the nave in 1887.

EAST CHALLOW : ST. NICHOLAS.

Drastically restored in 1854 and 1884. The font, possibly Early English, the Decorated south arcade and stoup at the west door, are all that is left of old work. The absurd tower and everything else are modern.

COLESHILL : ALL SAINTS.

Mostly rebuilt. Of Early English work there remain the arcades ; of Decorated, the south porch with parvise, south door and stoup. The tower is Perpendicular, and the south chapel 18th century. Everything else is "restored."

DENCHWORTH : ST. JAMES THE GREAT.

This church suffered at the hands of Street, who restored it in 1852, and destroyed the parvise over the south porch which

was built in 1693 by Gregory Geering, and formerly housed a small theological library. The south door is Norman; the rest of the church, where not restored, is Perpendicular.

DIRCOT : ALL SAINTS.

The greater part of the church is restored, and the north aisle is modern. The old work left comprises the Early English font and south arcade, roodstairs and two piscinæ (? Decorated), Perpendicular east window, and a 13th century effigy of an Abbot of Abingdon.

DRAYTON : ST. PETER.

Drastically restored in 1872, when the chancel and south chapel were rebuilt, the Norman walls and windows of the chancel being destroyed in the process. The rood-loft was removed, and the east window, Early English, triple lancet, was replaced by a modern one.

GARFORD : ST. LUKE.

Rebuilt in 1878. A few fragments of Early English work, including a piscina in the nave are all that is left of the original building, though externally it has a counterfeit appearance of antiquity.

LOCKINGE : ALL SAINTS.

This church is another of Street's victims. He renewed the walls and roofs, and added north and south porches in 1853. In 1886 Lord Wantage added a south aisle; and the original chancel and nave form the present north aisle. The tower, originally Perpendicular, was rebuilt in 1564

MARCHAM : ALL SAINTS.

Mostly rebuilt in 1837; the greater part of the church is of this date, and the rood-loft was removed then. Of Early English work there remain the tower, fragments of the old chancel and north chapel, and the south porch. The results of the rebuilding are deplorable, and the body of the church is one of the least attractive in the county.

## MILTON : ST. BLAISE.

This church was largely rebuilt in 1851, and is almost entirely modern. The brick north aisle with Decorated windows was removed. The tower is Decorated and Perpendicular; the south porch is Decorated, with a Perpendicular window.

## STANFORD IN THE VALE : ST. DENYS.

Though restored in 1855 by Street, when "all that was unseemly was swept away,"<sup>13</sup> less damage seems to have been done here than usual when a church fell into Street's hands, though by a later act of vandalism a heating apparatus was put into the fine Perpendicular south porch.

## LITTLE WITTENHAM : ST. PETER.

Rebuilt in 1863, and mostly new, except for the tower (Decorated and Perpendicular), and the font (Perpendicular).

## IV.

Church fittings of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as fonts, pulpits, and other non-structural objects, do not seem to be very numerous, and the following list comprises such fittings of these centuries as I have noted in the Vale of White Horse :

ABINGDON : St. Helen's : Jacobean pulpit.

ARDINGTON : Jacobean pulpit.

BAULKING : Jacobean pulpit ; rood-beam with the date A.D. 1708 carved thereon.

BESILS LEIGH : 18th century font, perhaps put in by W. J. Lenthall in 1788.

BUCKLAND : piscina with 17th century Italian carving representing the Adoration of the Shepherds ; Jacobean pulpit and gallery under tower.

CHARNEY : Jacobean screen and pulpit.

COXWELL, GT. : Jacobean pulpit.

DRAYTON : Jacobean pulpit.

HANNEY, W. : Jacobean pulpit.

HENDRED, E. : Carolean pulpit.

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<sup>13</sup> Rev. L. G. Maine, *History of Stanford* (1866) p. 48.

HENDRED, W. : Jacobean pulpit. ; font-cover dated 1630.

LOCKINGE : Jacobean pulpit.

LONGCOT : Jacobean pulpit.

LONGWORTH : Jacobean chancel screen.

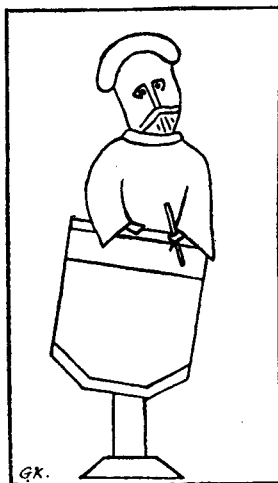
LYFORD : Jacobean pulpit.

SPARSHOLT : bench-ends, ? early 17th century.

STEVENTON : Jacobean pulpit.

UFFINGTON : clock dated 1613 (on the floor of the north transept).

WITTENHAM, LONG : Jacobean pulpit and screen of the south chapel.



BENCH-END, SPARSHOLT.