

conveyed the party to Walton, where tea was provided in the School-room. Unfortunately, time ran short, and the visit to the Church was quite cursory ; but it is intended to revisit Walton at an early date, to enable our members to have the benefit of the Vicar, Mr. Fisher's, promised description of a very interesting building. The return journey was made from Burton-on-Trent Station.

A second expedition was held on Wednesday, August 12th, to Pentrich and Codnor Castle. The party left Derby at 10.25 a.m., arriving at Wingfield Station at 10.59, where brakes were in readiness, and the visitors drove to Pentrich Church. Here the Vicar, the Rev. W. J. Ledward, received and conducted them over the building, and read the following paper :—

PENTRICH CHURCH.

To those who delight in searching the remains of past days, perhaps there is no county that presents for this purpose a wider or more varied field, more filled with sacred memories and heart-stirring incidents, than our own.

Derbyshire is rich in old village churches. The church in which you are assembled to-day, small and humble though it be, is full of stirring memories. It has resisted well for nearly eight hundred years the disintegrating forces of nature, and is still in excellent preservation, apparently able to weather the storms of centuries to come. It by no means follows that the date of its erection, about 1150, was the beginning of a religious edifice in this parish. It is well-known that many of our Norman churches were built on the site, and partly with the materials, of the rude Saxon building which previously existed on the spot, just as our builders in the Perpendicular period, when they added these clerestory windows, made use of the incised slabs of Norman, or perhaps Saxon, gravestones for the window sills.

The study of past times is often a melancholy retrospect, but in most minds there is a desire to know what has gone before us : to discover something of our ancestry, our race, our country, and, above all, our religion, and though our parish church, and the traditions that cling to it, give us no certain clue to what took place here before the Conquest, we know that long before the Saxons drove the ancient inhabitants into Wales and Cornwall, the Christian religion had been established and continued for 300 to 400 years, for the testimony of Gildas proves that there had been numerous churches all over Roman Britain, and we know from church history that *three* British bishops were present at the Council

of Arles, in the year of our Lord 359. But though Pentrich cannot show any remains of a British Church, it possesses relics of that early period in the materials (scattered over an adjoining field) of a portion of the ancient road called Icknield Street, made by the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago, evidently from water-worn stones from the bed of the river Derwent.

The Church of Pentrich is dedicated to S. Matthew, a vacant niche over the porch must once have contained a representation of the patron saint, which was most probably removed in Puritan times, also the ornamental stone cross at the end of the chancel roof, of which the empty socket still remains.

The style of architecture, you will have observed, is chiefly Norman. A striking feature is the beauty of the arcade of pillars and arches, which is much admired. Of the next two styles, the Early English and the Decorated (I borrow this from Mr. Cox's "Churches of Derbyshire") no traces are found, but the whole church, he remarks, seems to have been renovated and enlarged in the Perpendicular period, about the year 1430. The design of the east window is said to be unique, and worthy of attention. The old stained glass was probably removed at one of the restorations. The new, which is well worth inspection from its being thoroughly artistic, especially that in the south aisle, which is greatly admired, was designed and executed by M. Capronnier, of Brussels.

The tower, side aisles, porch, and nave are embattled, which gives the church a castellated appearance, symbolic doubtless of the spiritual nature of Christ's Church, militant here on earth.

A tradition exists that in olden times there used to be a house of religion attached to this church, remains of which have sometimes been found in digging graves on the north side of the church, but nothing exists of it above ground. The font is considered to be as ancient as the church, 1150. It was found about 35 years ago in the cellar of a former churchwarden, and put to the use of salting beef. It is supposed to have been originally built into one of the pillars of the nave. The pedestal, which is of later construction and design, bears the date of 1662.

There are five bells in the tower, three of which are of ancient date; one of them has the inscription "Ave Maria gratia plena," round the others is a handsome border of flowers and foliage, bearing in one place the name "Jesus" in old characters.

The earliest register contains the declaration insisted upon by the Parliament in the time of Cromwell, when all beneficed clergymen were compelled to sign an agreement to conform to Presbyterian practices, or resign their livings. One hundred and eighty signatures follow, consisting mostly of marks, very few being able to sign their names.

The fearful pestilence of the fourteenth century, called the Black Death, which devastated the whole of Europe, reached Derbyshire in May, 1349, This county suffered severely from it. Seventy-seven beneficed clergymen of Derbyshire died in that one dread period, and three successive vicars of Pentrich all died in the same fatal year.

It is mentioned in Dugdale's "Monasticon," that on the foundation of Darley Abbey, 1175, this church, with a considerable number of other Derbyshire churches, was bestowed upon that establishment.

The gift consisted of the advowson of the rectory of Pentrich only, but before long the Abbey of Darley had appropriated the great tithes, which to this day the church has never regained. At that early date the Parish of Pentrich consisted mostly of forest. The pannage of the forest for 40 pigs was given to Darley Abbey and confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Lord of the Manor had also granted a portion of the lands of Pentrich to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, who possessed a chapel at Waingriff in this parish. Disagreements very soon arose between the Knights and the Abbey about the number of swine to be turned into the woods, and a lawsuit decided that the Knights' claim should be limited to 20 swine and no goats. In connection with this affair, the wood in question is described as being bounded on the one side by the Camp of Pentrich, referring doubtless to the Roman Camp that used to be at Pentrich; the half-way station on the Icknield Street between Little Chester and Chesterfield.

"Abbots and monks," says Fuller in his Church History, "were notoriously covetous; not only did they appropriate to their convents glebes and tithes of churches, leaving but a poor pittance to the parish vicar, but they engrossed trade, and became brewers, farmers, tanners, and kept these trades and others besides in their own hands." It appears that at Pentrich they were ironmasters in the thirteenth century, for in one of the Darley Abbey documents it is stated that Hugh Fitzpiers, of Ulkerthorp, releases the Abbey from all damage from burning the wood of Pentrich, and for making of iron mines within the same wood. At the dissolution of monasteries, the lands held by Darley at Pentrich and Ripley fell to the Crown, and were granted to a family of the name of Zouch of Codnor, from whence they passed to the Cavendishes.

In the year 1552, in the sixth year of the reign of Edward VI., the Commissioners appointed to take inventories of Church goods found in Pentrich Church the following :—

- 1 Chalyce parcell gylte.
- 3 Corporas cases.
- 3 Parcells for albs.
- 1 Cope of red silk of colour with flowers.
- 1 Vestement of the same.
- 1 Vestement of red sattyn.

- 1 Old cope of twyll with an olde vestment of the same.
- 2 Albs.
- 2 Altar cloths.
- 2 Surplices.
- 1 Cross of brass plate.
- 1 Pyx of latyn.
- 1 Pair of censers.
- 1 Hand bell.
- 3 Bells in the steepyl.
- 2 Candlesticks of pewter.
- 1 Sacryng bell.
- 1 Cruett.
- 1 Old towel.
- 1 Byble.
- 1 Paraphrase of Erasmus.
- 1 Booke of the Comon Praer.

This Church of Pentrich was for 365 years under the rule of the Abbots of Darley, and therefore subject to the influence of the Papal power, but since the dissolution of monasteries, in the order of God's providence, it has reverted to its original status, with the exception of the great tithes, which still remain impropriated.

The foreign element is gone; abbots and monks no longer step in to alienate the people from their parish Priest. The old order remains—the Church as originally constituted, with its threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. The pure and simple faith of our Reformed Church is taught the people, and the Gospel is preached as in those early days of the Saxon Church here in Mercia, which owed its conversion from Paganism to the missionaries of Iona, by whose labours the half of England was evangelized and a great portion of Northern Europe as well. For it has been ascertained that it is notably the Celtic element that prevails after the lapse of 1,000 years in our English Christianity, and our Church owes more than is generally known to the pure faith, the spirit of poverty, and missionary labours of Columba of Iona, and through him to Patrick, the great apostle of Ireland, from whom the Church of Iona and Lindisfarn received its doctrine and ecclesiastical customs.

The drive was continued to Ripley, where luncheon was taken at the "Cock," after which the party drove on to Codnor Castle, and were received by Mr. F. C. Corfield, the Butterley Company having given every facility for inspecting the ruins. The Rev. Chas. Kerry, who has taken infinite pains to search into the past