

## Some Galleries in Tideswell Church.

By REV. CANON J. M. J. FLETCHER, M.A.



TIDESWELLE is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, A.D. 1086, as being then one of the berewicks, or hamlets, within the limits of the extensive Royal Manor of Hope. But there is no mention of chapel or priest there.

A church was evidently in existence, however, in 1192, for it is recorded that, in that year, King John, whilst yet Earl of Montaigne, bestowed the Church of Hope, *with its Chapel of Tideswell*, on the Bishop, Hugh, of Lichfield and Coventry. By 1254 Tideswell had been separated from Hope, and became a distinct parish, with a vicarage house, etc. The vicar, in return for certain emoluments, was to officiate in person in the church, and to maintain at his own cost a priest and a deacon as his assistants. The limestone rubble work still to be seen in the west wall of the chancel, and various stones inserted in the west wall of the nave, which were brought to light during the restoration of 1904, are in all probability remnants of this ancient church.

But the present magnificent church at Tideswell, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and which is so often designated "The Cathedral of the Peak," dates back to about the middle of the fourteenth century. One of its charms is that it has needed so little restoration, and, consequently, that its exterior has come down to us much as it was left by its original builders some five and a half centuries ago.

Within the church the chancel screen is almost as old as the building itself, and the gates are the original ones. Above the screen would be placed, as was general in parish churches throughout the country, the rood or figure of our Crucified Saviour. We may take it for granted that, in a church of the size and importance of that at Tideswell, this would stand not merely on a rood-beam, but in a rood-loft. Canon Andrew, who was Vicar of Tideswell from 1864 until 1900, and to whose taste and architectural knowledge the church which was restored in his time owes so much, writing in 1880, says: "The whole surface of the adjoining walls has been carefully searched for marks of what the old top (of the screen) was. Two grooves, one on each side of the arch in the top members of the capitals, prove tolerably conclusively that the screen reached at least to the top of the capitals. But evidence is not wanting on the walls of the existence at some time—whether when the screen was first erected or a little later is not clear—of a loft, perhaps six feet wide, if we may judge from some of the old marks. The approach to this ancient loft was obtained (it seems likely) by the stone staircase, through what has been generally regarded as the old stone pulpit of Tideswell church." This old stone erection, sometimes spoken of as "the pulpit," but more commonly termed "the penitentiary," was apparently pulled down between the years 1820 and 1830. It "was about 6 feet square, and contained a newel winding staircase, with a door looking towards the south, about 4 feet high by 2 feet wide."

By an Order of Council, issued in 1547-8, all images, whether they had been abused or not, were to be taken away out of parish churches. One consequence of this order was the removal and destruction of the roods everywhere throughout the country. The lofts, or galleries, were usually left, and in process of time some of them became organ-lofts; others, galleries for the use of the singers. Whether this was the case at Tideswell, or indeed what in the way of gallery existed there either in



pre-Reformation times or in the earlier days after the Reformation, there are no known documents which can show us.

But, at any rate, as we shall see directly, there was an ancient gallery (*hyperstilium vetustum*), which stood over the entrance to the chancel in the year 1724, when permission was obtained from the patrons to remove it from that position and to re-erect it at the west end of the church. Presumably it had been used as a singers' gallery. Possibly at this time the parochial church band, with the clarionet and the hautboy, and the bassoon, and the serpent, and the flute, and the violin, and the bass viol, etc., would be taking the place of the old organ, and, if so, the musicians, whether vocal or instrumental, would not be averse to a move to a new position, where they could have a larger space than the somewhat confined one under the chancel arch.

We find, too, from the document which follows, what was not at all an unusual occurrence in the eighteenth century—one of the most influential inhabitants of the town erecting a gallery on the top of the chancel screen.

The following is a copy of the faculty which Mr. Eccles, a Tideswell lawyer, obtained from the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield, who were then, as they are now, the rectors and the patrons of the living, granting him permission to erect the gallery:—

“OMNIBUS CHRISTI FIDELIBUS ad quos hoc presens scriptum pervenerit, nos GULIELMUS WALMISLEY Sacræ Theologiæ Professor, Ecclesiæ Cath. Lich. DECANUS et CAPITULUM ejusdem literis fulciti CUM nobis et officio nostro ex parte Samuelis Eccles Generosi parochiani parochiæ de Tidswell in Comitatu Derby infra nostram Jurisdictionem Suggestum et sit allegatum, Quod ille dominus Samuel Eccles fuit et in presenti est Paterfamilias, laremque et Familiam in dicta parochia habuit et in presenti habet, Sedibus tamen sive Scamnis in Ecclesia parochiali de Tidswell predicto ubi cum Sua familia divinis interesse possit destitutus, NOBISQUE humiliter supplicaverit quatenus Licentiam et Facultatem nostras ad extruendum vel ædificandum (ex

propriis suis Sumptibus) Hyperstilium in Ecclesia parochiali de Tideswell, super Transitu in Cancellum ejusdem Ecclesiæ, Vigenti et sex pedes in Longitudine et decem pedes in Latitudine, Necnon (ex Sumptibus parochianorum omnium et Singulorum in Genere) ad amovendum et transferendum Hyperstilium vetustum a transitu predicto ad Campanile ejusdem Ecclesiæ in usum et Commodum Psalmorum Cantorum in dicta Ecclesia concedere Dignaremur. Nos pio suo desiderio favorabiliter Inclinantes, Justiciæque et Æquitatis Complementum ei in hac parte ministrare cupientes Licentiam et Facultatem nostras prefato Samueli Eccles ad Extruendum vel Ædificandum prefatum Hyperstylidium modo, Loco, et Forma predicta, Necnon ad amovendum et transferendum dictum vetustum Hyperstilium ad Locum predictum ad usum et commodum antedictum (vocatis in ea parte vocandis ac Juris ordine in omnibus observato) Concedendum fore Decrevimus Sicque per presentes Concedimus. **IN CUJUS REI TESTIMONIUM** Sigillum Officii nostri presentibus apponi fecimus. **DATUM** Sub Sigillo Officii nostri vicesimo die mensis Julii Anno Domini 1724.”

The following is a translation of the document :—

“ To all Christ’s faithful people to whom this present writing shall come, we William Walmisley, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield, and the Chapter of the same, strengthened by letters,<sup>1</sup>—Since it has been suggested and pointed out to us and to our office on the part of Samuel Eccles, gentleman, parishioner of the parish of Tideswell, in the county of Derby, and within our jurisdiction, That the said Mr. Samuel Eccles was, and at the present time is, the Head of a Family, and both had, and at the present time has, his dwelling-house and family in the said parish, and yet is without seats or benches in the said parish church of Tideswell, where he may attend Divine service with his family, And seeing that he hath humbly prayed us for our licence and faculty to erect

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Vicar and churchwardens of Tideswell had written to Lichfield in support of Mr. Eccles’ application.

and build (at his own cost) a Loft in the parish church of Tideswell, over the entrance into the Chancel of the said church, twenty-six feet in length and ten feet in breadth, And also that we would vouchsafe to permit him to remove and transfer (at the cost of the parishioners) the old Loft from the said (chancel) entrance to the bell tower of the said church, for the use and convenience of the singers of the psalms in the said church. We being favourably inclined to his pious wish, and being desirous that the ends of justice and equity in this respect may be served in his behalf, have decreed and by these presents do grant our Licence and faculty to the said Samuel Eccles to erect or build the said Loft in the manner, place, and form aforesaid, and also to remove and transfer the said old Loft to the above-mentioned place for the use and convenience of the aforementioned (persons), the necessary consents having been first obtained, and the legal course being in all things observed. In witness whereof we have caused our official seal to be affixed to these presents. Given under our official seal on the twentieth day of the month of July, in the year of our Lord 1724."

The seal is missing. Under the fold of the parchment are the words, "Nath. Hinckes Reg'ius," and the deed is endorsed, "my ffaculty for erecting lofts at Tideswell."

The gallery supplied more accomodation than was required by Mr. Eccles for the use of his family. The pews therein which he did not need were sold to two of his neighbours, as the following documents testify. (They refer to different portions of the gallery parted with for a monetary consideration to *Samuel Ward, of Litton*; but they allude to a pew in the front of the gallery which had been previously purchased by *Miss Anne Rossington*):—

"12th December 1724. Mr. Sam<sup>l</sup> Eccles to Mr. Sam<sup>l</sup> Ward.—Sale of Seat in Tideswell Church.

"WHEREAS The Dean and Chapter of Litchfield Hath Granted under their Common Seale a Faculty or Licence unto

Samuell Eccles of Tideswell in the County of Derby Gentleman the Sole Benefitt and property of Erecting a Gallery Between the Church of Tidswell and Chancel thereto adjoining. AND WHEREAS The said Samuell Eccles in persueance of the s<sup>d</sup> Faculty or Licence hath Erected a Loft or Gallery on the place aforesaid and having taken such Seats or Pews for his Own and Family's Use as he thinks proper, and being minded to Dispose of the other Seats or Pews in the Loft to the Best Bidder HEE The said Samuell Eccles for the Consideration of Eight pounds and Tenn Shillings of Lawfull money of great Brittain to him well and truely in hand paid by Samuell Ward of Litton in the county of Derby Gentleman, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, HATH Granted Bargained Sold and Confirmed and by these presents Doth Grant Bargaine Sell and Confirme unto the said Samuell Ward ALL that Seacond Right Hand or North Seats (*sic*) or Pew in the said Gallery Satuate on the Back of the Front Seate which M<sup>rs</sup> Anne Rossington of Tidswell afores<sup>d</sup> has Bought Together with all ways privileges and Advantages thereto belonging As Farr as in him the said Samuell Eccles Lyeth by Vertue and Under the said recited Faculty or Licence TO HAVE AND TO HOLD The said seate or Pew unto the said Samuell Ward in as Large Ample manner and Forme as the said Samuell Eccles c'u'd or might have Enjoyed the same Seate or Pew under the same Faculty or Licence if these presents had never been made IN WITNESSE whereof I the said Samuell Eccles have hereunto Sett my hand and Seale the Twelfth day of December in the Eleaventh Yeare of the Reigne of our Sovereigne Lord George by the Grace of God King over Great Britteinie—Anno Domini 1724.

“ Sealed and delivered  
in the presence of us  
Law<sup>ce</sup> Downes

Sam<sup>ll</sup> Eccles



Richard R C Chrichlow  
his marke.”

As this and the next document show, there were in the gallery two rows of seats. They were, we know, divided by a gangway over the centre of the screen. The pews on the south, both back and front, were occupied by Mr. Eccles. The far end of the front one on the north side belonged to Miss Anne Rossington, and she had a right of way through the rest of the northern front seat, a door dividing off her portion. The remainder of this front seat on the north, with the whole of the back seat on the north side, were in the occupation of Mr. Samuel Ward, of Litton.

“Whereas The Dean and Chapter of Litchfield hath Granted under their Common Seale a Faculty or Licence unto Samuell Eccles of Tidswell in the County of Derby Gentleman the Sole Benefitt and property of Erecting a Gallery Betweene the Church of Tidswell and Chancel thereto adjoining And Whereas the s<sup>d</sup> Samuell Eccles in persueance of the said Faculty or Licence hath Erected a Loft or Gallery on the place aforesaid and haveing taken such Seats or pews for his Own and Family's Use as he thinks proper & being minded to Dispose of the other seats or Pews in the Loft to the best Bidder Hee the said Samuell Eccles for the Cons: of Five pounds of good Lawful money of great Brittain to him well and truely in hand paid by Samuell Ward of Litton in the County of Derby Gentleman the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged Hath Granted Bargained Sold and Confirmed and by these presents doth Grant Bargaine Sell and Confirme unto the said Samuell Ward All That neather or Lower part of y<sup>t</sup> right hand Front Seate or pew in the said Gallery as it is now Devided by a Door or partition in the said Seate & containing Five Foot & Six Inches in length (but excepting hereout unto Mrs. Anne Rossington of Tidswell afores<sup>d</sup> Spinster who hath bought the upper parte of the said seate Full Free Liberty for her the s<sup>d</sup> Anne Rossington & her Assigns to go in & thro' and pass and repass at all and every time & times hereafter at her and her Assigns' Will and pleasure through the aforesaid Seate or pew to the upper parte thereof without



any interruption or Disturbance of the said Samuell Ward or any Claimeing under him) Togeather with all ways and Advantages thereunto belonging as far as in him the said Samuell Eccles Lyeth by Vertue and under the said recited Faculty or Licence to have and to hold the said Neather or Lower parte of the said Seate or Pew unto the said Samuell Ward in as Large Ample manner and Forme as the said Samuell Eccles c'u'd or might have Enjoyed the same under the said Faculty or Licence if these presents had never been made. In witness whereof I the said Samuel Eccles have hereunto Sett my hand & Seale this Twelfth day of December Anno Domini 1724.

“ Sealed and delivered in the presence of

Law<sup>ce</sup> Downes

Sam<sup>ll</sup> Eccles



Richard R C Chrichlow his marke.”

The gallery erected by Mr. Eccles is again alluded to in a deed bearing date 12th March, 1750, when various property was sold by the executors of Samuel Eccles to Mr. John Beech, included in which was “ a pew or seat erected by the said Samuel Eccles in the chancel of the church of Tideswell.”

This gallery, which was taken down about the year 1826, was well remembered by many of the older inhabitants when Canon Andrew became vicar of the parish in 1864, and from them he gleaned the following particulars: “ The loft erected by Mr. Eccles was approached by wooden steps from the north wall of the chancel. The back of the loft was of considerable height, shutting out most of the east window. The pews were divided by a gangway over the centre of the screen. Mr. Goddard<sup>1</sup> sat under the black stone tablet still to be seen on the north side of the arch, and his head, as he sat, was not much below the tablet.” This gallery was subsequently designated the Hucklow loft.

The faculty granted to Mr. Eccles in 1724 speaks of an old loft (*vetustum hyperstilium*), which was to be removed at the

<sup>1</sup> Head Master of the Grammar School, 1770-1790.

cost of the parish from the chancel entrance to the bell tower of the church for the use of the "singers of the psalms." When the more modern gallery (erected at the west end of the church about the year 1829) was removed in 1904, traces were found of this earlier gallery which it had displaced. It appears to have been situated about eleven feet above the floor level, to have been about twenty-one feet in length, and to have extended into the nave of the church about four feet eastward beyond the tower arch. This was doubtless the "singers' loft" in the days when the celebrated Samuel Slack was leader of the far-famed Tideswell choir.

And so we can picture to ourselves what the interior of Tideswell church was like during the century which elapsed from 1724 until 1824, whilst the Revs. Adamson Kenyon, Edward Markland, William Stephenson, and Thomas Brown were vicars. There were at least two rows of seats in the gallery surmounting the chancel screen, the one raised above the other, and those who sat there had their backs to the altar and faced the body of the church. Another gallery was placed at the west end of the nave, underneath the tower, and projected beyond it into the church, where the musicians and singers were assembled, and a part of which was given up for the seats for the ringers. The church was seated with somewhat rough-looking heavy oak pews, one or two of which still remain in the north transept. Probably there was a "three-decker" for the use of the clergyman and the clerk. The church was coated afresh every few years with new layers of whitewash. The ancient font during a considerable portion of the time was discarded and used as a "parish paint-pot." The well-to-do "gentry" in the gallery over the screen always faced the west, and during the musical parts of the service the rest of the congregation would turn in the same direction, in order that the better they might be able to see and to hear the choir and the instrumentalists.

According to the minutes of a vestry meeting held on the 20th day of February, 1824, it was unanimously agreed that

the churchwardens for the time being of Tideswell should be authorised to procure a faculty to empower them to make certain alterations and additions to the church, amongst which were the following:—

“To pull down the gallery now used by the singers and erect a new one according to plans produced.”

“To underdraw with lath, plaster, and other requisite materials the roof of the Church of Tideswell aforesaid.”

“To new pew the said church.”

The addition of a flat plaster ceiling, which was probably intended in some measure to guard against cold in those days when churches were not artificially warmed, or, if they were so, it was only by means of stoves, was, fortunately, never carried out.

The re-pewing was done in 1826-7, and a notice is extant advertising that “the making and fixing new pews in Tideswell Church,” etc., etc., was “to be let in five lots on Monday, January 2nd, 1826.”

The erection of the gallery, though included in the same faculty, does not appear to have been carried out until 1829. Samuel Slack, the renowned vocalist, had died in 1822, but the Tideswell choir had been raised to a high state of excellence, and was still famed far and near. In the old gallery the sound of the voices and of the instruments would be lost under the vaulting of the tower, and so perhaps this new gallery, which stretched across the whole breadth of the nave and extended one bay into the church, was contemplated in order that the voices of the singers and the tones of the instruments might be heard with greater effect.

In process of time the musicians and their instruments gave place to an organ and a choir in proximity to the chancel. The supports of the gallery filled up so large a space in the nave that it added very little to the accommodation. Moreover, the erection of mission churches in the various hamlets supplied what was needed in the more distant parts of the parish. The gallery did not make for reverence. Kneeling

was almost an impossibility, and the sound of every movement of each foot was only too noticeable. Besides this, the gallery dwarfed the length and spoilt the beautiful proportions of the magnificent "Cathedral of the Peak." Accordingly, at a vestry meeting held on January 1st, 1904, whilst the writer of this article was vicar of the parish, it was unanimously decided to apply for a faculty authorising the removal of the gallery. Not only was there no objection lodged and the faculty granted, but the actual work of demolition was done by willing volunteers. Some number of men gave up their employment for several days together in order that they might assist in the removal of the structure. And so substantial was the pediment upon which it rested that no less than one hundred and fifty tons of limestone, rubble, mortar, and plaster were carried away from the church. The west end of the building was restored under the superintendence of Mr. Oldrid Scott, of Westminster. The improvement was most noticeable, and exceeded the expectations even of the most sanguine. The noble tower arch, the beautiful Transitional window, and the groining below the ringing-chamber were once more brought into view, and the church was once again restored to its original proportions.

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NOTE.—Samuel Eccles, to whom the faculty was granted for the erection of the gallery in 1724, was a lawyer, resident in Tideswell. His wife was a Statham, a relative of the celebrated Sir John Statham. He (Eccles) died in 1734, at the age of 47 years, and an alabaster tablet to his memory is fixed to the south wall of the chancel. He lived in what is now the school house attached to the grammar school, and from him it takes its name, "Eccles Hall." He gave a silver paten to the church, which bears the following inscription: "Ex dono Samuel Eccles de Tidswell Gen. 20th February, 1724."

“Mrs.” Anne Rossington, who is before mentioned as having been a purchaser of one of the seats in the gallery from Samuel Eccles, was also a donor of a piece of church plate. The large flagon is thus inscribed: “The gift of Mrs. Ann Rossington to Tiddeswall Church, 1738.”

The table of benefactions against the south wall of the vestry underneath the tower thus alludes to this gift: “Mrs. Ann Rossington, of Tideswell, Spinster, by her last will, bearing date the 7th of July, 1737, gave the sum of twenty pounds to buy a piece of silver plate for the Communion Service, and also a further sum of twenty pounds, the interest of which is to be distributed amongst the poor of Tideswell on St. Thomas’ day yearly for ever.”

The will was evidently signed upon her death-bed, for the parish register contains the following entry: “1737, July 10, Buried Mistriss Ann Rossington of Tideswell.”

The flagon was consequently purchased after her death with the money bequeathed for the purpose. The “Rossington Charity” was formerly given in bread every Sunday. It is now annually distributed on New Year’s Day by the vicar and churchwardens in small gifts of money.