

STONE AXE-HAMMER FOUND AT DERBY.

In November, 1931, a workman digging a drain for new houses on the Sinfin estate of the Derby Corporation, found a fine specimen of a stone axe-hammer in undisturbed clay about two feet below the soil. The implement measures $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 3 in., and is drilled for a haft, the hole being $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter.

Stone implements of this type were made during the bronze age and not earlier, as many of them are based on bronze forms. Generally, as in this case, the hole has been bored with a tubular drill of bronze, or bone, turned with a bow. The stone seems to be a fine-grained millstone grit, and there does not appear to be the slightest sign of use at either end, in fact it must have been lost very soon after it was made. Some poor man spent a long time shaping this implement or weapon, and before he had time to make use of it, he either lost it or fell a victim to the prowess of an enemy. It is now in the Derby Museum.

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WALL PAINTINGS AT DALE CHURCH.

The parish of Dale Abbey lies 6 miles east-north-east of Derby and is one of the most interesting villages in the county. First, there is the 'hermit's cave,' where Cornelius the 'hermit of Depedale' is said to have made his home in the early half of the 12th century, then there are the ruins of the abbey, including the arch of the east window of the chancel, and lastly the church with its attached church-house.

Dale Church is best described by that misused word 'quaint,' for quaint it is in every sense of the word. In size it is extremely small, while the little interior is filled with high-backed pews and a loft, or gallery

altogether out of proportion to the size of the building, and approached by a staircase built on the outside.

Dale was always worth a visit, but the recent discovery of medieval wall paintings in the interior of the Church will make it additionally attractive to the archæologist and intelligent Rambler.

The discovery came about in this way. The interior badly needed renovation, and the architects, Mr. P. H. Currey and Mr. C. C. Thompson, were called in to advise, and superintend the work. One of the jobs was lime-washing the walls, and as they carried many old coats of lime, the architects gave instructions that great care should be used in removing them, and if traces of colour were revealed they were to be at once informed, as they had in mind the possibility of concealed paintings.

Almost immediately thick coats of lime peeled away over a large area exposing a most interesting and valuable painting "The Visitation" described below.

On the advice of the architects, Professor Tristram, our leading expert on wall paintings and their treatment, was called in, and under his supervision the walls were completely stripped, revealing paintings, the details of which follow. The professor has treated the paintings by his special process, and there is every expectation that they will be preserved for posterity. Professor Tristram suggests that it would be advisable to make copies of the paintings to be framed and hung in the church, and it is hoped that this will be done.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PAINTINGS, by Prof. E. W. Tristram, D.Litt.

In various parts of the Church there are traces of wall paintings, dating from the 13th to the 17th century. The most considerable remains are on the north wall of the nave, forming part of a band of subjects which extended between the doorway, at the west, and the

window at the east. The subjects are enclosed in rectangular panels separated by bands of scroll ornament, and bordered above by a band of bent riband ornament in black. They depict the Infancy of Christ and are:—

1. *The Annunciation.* A fragment of the Angel Gabriel alone remains, which includes the left hand holding a scroll, the right arm raised in salutation, and parts of the wings, and in the bottom right hand corner part of the dress of the Blessed Virgin.

2. *The Visitation.* Mary and Elizabeth embrace one another. Mary, veiled, in red tunic and white mantle bearing a white nimbus, is on the right. Elizabeth, veiled, in white mantle and bearing a red nimbus, is on the left. The lower part of the figures is destroyed. In the left hand bottom corner is a light sketch of a head apparently unrelated to the subject and possibly a tentative trial of the painter. The group is remarkable for its power of design and expression, indicating the hand of a most masterly painter.

3. *The Nativity.* A fragment also remains which includes part of the couch, bed clothes and pillow covered with a fret pattern, and the head of the Blessed Virgin veiled, in a recumbent pose resting on the right hand.

Traces of colour on the wall show that the subjects were continued as far as the window. The work is executed in black line (red line for the features of the figures) and filled in with a flat red and pale grey. Its date is about 1280.

On the eastern splay of the window there are remains of a subject, evidently by a different and less skilled hand in red and yellow ochre. They include the figure of the Divine Child bearing a cruciform nimbus, with his right hand raised in blessing, and some lines and spaces of colour which suggest that he is seated on the lap of the Blessed Virgin with St. Joseph at the side. If this is an accurate reading of the latter then the subject is probably part of

the Adoration of the Magi, the three Kings having been represented on the other splay of the window. This subject would be in approximately its right position in relation to the other Infancy subjects mentioned above.

At the eastern end of this wall there are remains of a lozenge diaper enclosing a pattern of foliated crosses in red ochre.

The mouldings around the window in the eastern wall of the nave are painted yellow. On the north splay there are remains of a geometric pattern in red and yellow. On the wall at the south side of the window there are wavy bands of ornament in red and yellow, and below them the head of an Ecclesiastic. All the painting mentioned so far belongs to the latter part of the 13th century. On the wall above the window there are traces of painting of a later date, difficult to decipher, but apparently of an ornamented nature.

The late 13th century treatment of the nave appears to have been part of a scheme which included the decoration of the whole Church, for some remains of contemporary painting in the south aisle. High up on the south wall at the west end there are some lines of drapery which were clearly once part of a subject. On the western splay of the western window there is a masonry pattern with cinque-foils or roses in red, and traces of the same pattern may be seen on the western splay of the other window in the same wall. On the wall between the two windows there are parts of a black letter text apparently of 16th century. Except for traces of colour here and there this concludes a list of all the decipherable paintings in the Church.