

## CLOWNE CHURCH.

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**R**ESTORATION work has recently been undertaken at Clowne Church in the Chancel and Sanctuary. The Church is old and there are good examples of Norman work of the middle 12th century. There is a Norman south doorway with unusual detail and the Norman chancel arch contains equally interesting detail. The jambs of the arch are cut into shafts and the capitals are ornamented with varied geometrical patterns.

The Chancel contained a large organ which it was desired to move to the gallery at the west end. The plaster of the walls was in a bad condition and it was feared that the roof timbers were perishing. The ceiling had been plastered (probably in 1720), in a form to represent barrel vaulting, in such a way that a part of the tie beam of each truss was exposed on the underside. These timbers were moulded.

There seemed to be opportunities for uncovering something of interest when stripping down, and although nothing of momentous importance was found, at least four items of archæological interest arose which the Society may wish to record or which readers may wish to see.

Instructions were given for the wall plaster to be removed carefully because it was evident that the original plaster had been skimmed over again at a later date. No mural pictures were found but parts of post-reformation texts were disclosed. Unfortunately there was insufficient to disclose any complete word and the best portion was one of the frames of somewhat elaborate

design. It was poorly executed, however, and a typical "pineapple" could clearly be seen. At dado height on both walls there were traces of a reversing scroll executed in a russet brown colour. The plaster was too much damaged by damp to remain and it was necessary to remove it all.

Clearing the walls of the plaster disclosed the most interesting find. Interesting because of its puzzling nature. Midway down the Chancel, at a height of about four feet, there are square holes in the wall. These holes, one on each side, are exactly opposite each other and about one foot square. They appear to have penetrated the full thickness of the walls. The holes were intended to be permanent because they are built with lintels over. The effect on the outside face of the wall could not be discovered because the walls are stuccoed externally, but an examination from inside suggests that stones were cemented in on the outside when the stucco was applied, to provide a face on which to apply the render. The writer is at a complete loss in determining their purpose, but if he cannot say what they were, he can point out what they were not. They are too low for a rood beam (and in the wrong place), they are too high for a rail, they are square through the wall and cannot be squints, they are not alms or leper holes (why two?) nor are they constructional. Readers' views will be of interest.

The next interesting disclosure was made when the ceiling was taken down. The roof timbers in the trusses are very good examples of fourteenth-century construction and moulding. The ceiling joists were made up of various timbers, one of which was undoubtedly the top of the original rood beam. Under this rood beam there was probably a painted screen; for boards with a painted design were also found. Many rafters had to be replaced but all the major timbers have been preserved.

Lastly the Vicar found, in the tower, a piscina head,

which, so far as the writer can ascertain, is unique. The piscina is undoubtedly Norman and like a number of Norman piscinæ was mounted on a shaft instead of being let into the wall. Although twelfth-century piscinæ are rare, the fact which makes this one appear to be unique is that the square head is moulded on two adjacent sides with the other two sides rough. It was thus made to fit into a corner and not against a side wall. Cox in his report states, "On a window seat in the Chancel is a circular stone, moulded in front, that has formerly been the drain of the old Norman piscina." This was obviously the shaft on which the head stood but a careful enquiry has failed to elicit its present whereabouts.