

RAGDALE.

By J. HOLLAND WALKER, M.B.E., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

THE little hamlet of Ragdale gets its name from the River Wreak, and its modern name is a colloquialism of Wreak Dale. The only objects of interest are the half-ruined hall and the little church, both of which are more picturesque than historic, for Ragdale is so remote as to be off the track of history. In early days the manor belonged to the Lords Bassett of Drayton, but in the 14th century it passed into the hands of a certain John Shirley, who built a hall here. Possibly the half-timbered work still remaining may represent this hall. There seems to be no recorded history of the development of the present ruin, but judging from its style, and particularly its chimneys, it may be assumed that it was gradually added to during the 16th and 17th centuries.

In 1629 the stone porch was added by Sir Henry Shirley, and one of the great interests is the heraldry displayed about the building. Much of it is badly weathered, but one coat bears fifty-four quarterings.

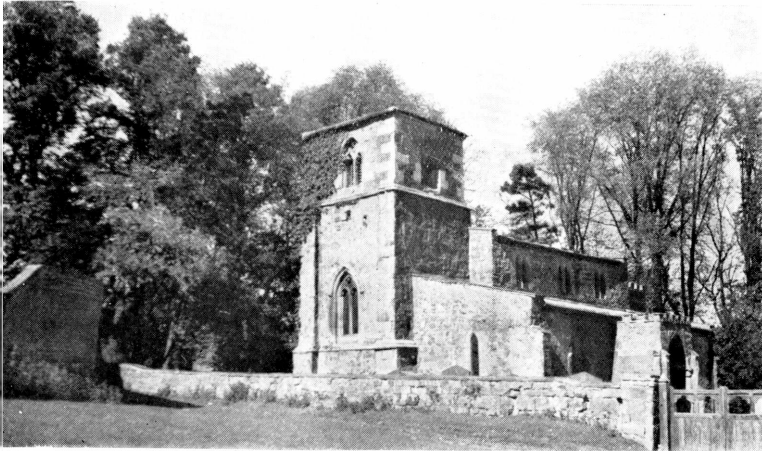
In 1711 the reigning Shirley was created Earl Ferrers and seems to have used Ragdale for sporting purposes only, and there is a tradition that the principal chamber was turned into a mews for hawks. Upon his death in 1717, the house was let to a tenant farmer and eventually divided into tenements. Only recently has it become uninhabited.

Ragdale Church is dedicated to All Saints and is mostly Early English in style, although its architecture is extremely rustic. The stone tower is terminated by a brick upper storey, and the architectural details inside

the church are not of any particular moment. There are, however, one or two ancient oak benches preserved at the west end of the nave and in the chancel, and in the curiously arranged family pew is some rather nice oak furniture. The whole church was restored in 1874 at the cost of Countess Sforza Cesarini, who placed heraldic windows in the south aisle to commemorate her ancestors.

In the churchyard is an exceedingly well-preserved churchyard cross of the 14th century, with its limbs terminating in fleurs-de-lis.





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All Saints Church, Ragdale.



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General View of Ragdale Hall.