

EXCURSION AND ANNUAL MEETING,
29TH JUNE, 1923.

The excursion for the year 1923 took the form of a trip on the river from Bourne End to Medmenham and back. A stop was made at Marlow, where the Church was visited and the Vicar was present to show the Hobart monument and other items of interest. The party then returned to the boat and passed up the river to Hurley, where the Church and the grounds of Lady Place were visited. The Rev. W. Seymour T. Parker, the Vicar, was unable to be present, but had left a paper on the architectural features of the Church, compiled from the writings of the late Rev. F. T. Wethered, a former Vicar of Hurley.

NOTES OF INTEREST ON HURLEY CHURCH.

Hurley owes its existence to the persuasion and example of the pious Leceline, second wife of Geoffrey de Mandeville. He had buried his first wife, Athelais, the mother of his sons, in the cloisters of Westminster, and had given commandment concerning the resting-place of his own remains beside her.

Leceline, his second wife, showing no jealousy of Athelais, and with a pious feeling that, out of the hundred or so of Manors which her husband had received from the King, he was bound to make some offering to God from the good gifts that had been bestowed upon him, persuaded her husband, Geoffrey, to do honour to our village sanctuary; Geoffrey therefore caused it to be dedicated afresh to God, founded here a Benedictine cell to Westminster, and endowed it with tithes and lands from all parts of his vast possessions.

The large south doorway of the church, like the west doorway and window, is an insertion of the 12th century into the old Saxon wall. It was much altered in the restoration of the church in 1852, and there was a great deal of imitation Norman work put into

it. But the beautifully moulded genuine zig-zag chalk here is some of the finest Norman work in the church. The cylindrical shafts which support the Norman arches on the inside of the south and west doorways with their chaste capitals are good examples of early 12th century work.

Before entering the church through the south door is a little stone recess in the south wall under the large chancel window made entirely of chalk except for the sill and corbel-heads at the ends of the drip-stone; it is a beautiful example of the Decorated period about 1350.

The font is of a reddish compact sandstone, probably of the end of the 14th or early 15th century; it is tub-shaped and panelled. This font was originally intended for baptism by immersion. It was removed to its present position in 1852, and raised on a stone pedestal.

The northern wall of the church is considerably out of the perpendicular, although absolutely safe. The rough, rude masonry all along this side of the building is very remarkable. Until 1852 all the windows on the north side of the church were stopped up flush with the wall. One of them larger and much longer than the rest was undoubtedly at one time a doorway leading from an upper storey in one of the monastic buildings into a gallery in the church.

The windows on the south side of the church have undergone a considerable change at different periods. Starting from the east, one of those rounded windows opening into the present vestry with deep splays inside is probably Saxon, or possibly not more remote than very early Norman. The next is a "Saxon" window, but before 1852 it was elongated to something like double its length for the purpose of getting more light into the church. Then comes the large insertion of the 14th century already referred to. And next another "Saxon" piercing which previous to 1852 had been converted into a large double-light window with the original rounded head of the ancient window showing up above the more modern aperture. Next in order in 1852 came two large sharp headed

lights between a large pointed spandrel, and then followed another "Saxon" window much lengthened. West of the porch, in this southern wall came a window of two cinquefoil lights with the top of a rounded Saxon window at its head, and immediately overhead in the slant of the roof was a dormer window; and last of all came another "Saxon" window opening into the gallery.

Some years ago pieces of Purbeck were found close to the church in the form of mullion bases and small cylinder shafts, and it is believed that when some centuries ago the windows in the north wall were all shut up great changes also were made in the windows of the South wall, and that these pieces are remains of early English windows, which once found their place in the southern wall.

The floor level of the nave was formerly much lower than the surrounding level of the ground, and four steps had to be descended from the churchyard through both the south and west doors. The base of a huge monument to the Lovelace family in the sanctuary is now partly hidden owing to the raising of the floor level, and an inscription now hidden was as follows:

Johannes Lovelace, Armiger
mortem obiit 25 Augusti 1558, et
uxor ejus, obiit 12 Novembris
An 1579.

The superior arch of the west doorway remains intact, and is one of the finest specimens of chevron late Norman work to be found anywhere. The present dripstone which has roses as corbels is all modern. A small section of the inner arch of Norman zig-zag in chalk remains.

Immediately above is a large Norman window of two semi-circular and beautifully executed arches, in chalk, in splendid condition. Both the upper and the sub-arch are ornamented with compound Norman chevron work, and on the soffit of the lower one there is similar but more simple work. The outer arch is supported by two cylindrical shafts with capitals from the abacus of which the arch springs. The sub-arch

evidently at one time sprung also from imposts, of an order similar, no doubt, to the other shafts, but these are now gone. The dripstone, of Norman cable pattern with corbels of griffins' heads, is modern. The old dripstone was also of cable pattern.

The second bell most probably was founded by one John Sanders, of Reading, who succeeded to the business of John White, who was a bell caster there from about 1539 to about 1559. The arms of the see of Winchester, a sword crossing two keys, will be found on the bell, so that it appears that John Sanders was in some way connected with that see. The diameter of the bell is 31 inches. The tenor bell, the diameter of which measures 35 inches, was cast by Joseph Carter, of Reading, in 1602. His initials, I.C., occur upon it, and also the date at which it was cast.

The communion plate is extremely chaste, and was given by Sir Henry Johnson, son-in-law of John, third Lord Lovelace, of Hurley, two years after his lordship's death in 1693.

The church registers date back to 1560. They are in excellent preservation, and are perfect and continuous throughout, including the time of the Commonwealth.

LADY PLACE.

Passing from the west door round the west of the school and north of it you pass through an archway into the private ground of the famous "Lady Place," first into what was part of the cloisters of the old monastery between the refectory on the left and north and the church on the right and south.

The west end of the church is certainly not later than the Norman period. About 9ft. from the ground there are to be seen sawn-off beams which clearly formed the roof of a corridor from the extreme East end of the northern wall to the blocked up Norman doorway, which is exactly opposite to a doorway of the same period in the south wall of the refectory. It is evident from the different shade of colour on the southern wall of the refectory that a covered

ambulatory ran along the south wall of the building exactly in correspondence with that along the North wall of the church. Also it is clear that these two Norman doorways were connected by another covered ambulatory; and thus we get an almost perfect sketch of the old monastery cloister, which it will be seen was less than one-half in extent of the quadrangle at the back of the church at the present day.

If we follow the building plans of the Abbey of Tintern, which was of the Benedictine Order, we should be able to assume that the chapter house of Hurley would be situated east of this quadrangle where the buildings known nowadays as the Bachelors Buildings of Lady Place are situated, or a few feet to the east of the door of these buildings just inside Lady Place lawn (to be seen from the other side). The Prior's Lodgings would be on the western side of the quadrangle, now known as Paradise.

In the Spring of 1897 excavations in this quadrangle laid bare foundations at varying distances from each other running North and South. It was clear on examination that a passage ran along an upper storey of a building through the deep Norman window in the Norman wall above the blocked up doorway and opposite to the present position of the Church Font, by this an entrance was made into a gallery of the Church.

So the garth or greensward in the middle of the cloisters would thus be reduced to very small dimensions. The kitchen was no doubt close to the refectory, perhaps to the west of it where an out-house now stands.

The refectory, which measures 70ft. in length and 20ft. in width, is of two distinct periods. The lower part is Norman, the upper portion being of very early Decorated style. On the northern side of the refectory will be seen traces of fresco work on the jambs of the most western windows.

In the grounds will be found the crypt, which was under the central portion of the house that was pulled down. Inscriptions will be found outside the entrance

to this crypt, and also inside the crypt, which are of historical interest and speak for themselves.

The moat and fishing pool are easily to be seen to the north and east of the gardens, and in the paddock to the west across the road the old dovecote and tithe barn.

In the village is the Old Bell Inn, 12th century, which used to be the guest-house of the Monastery.

An underground passage runs from the crypt in Lady Place to this inn in one direction, and in the other under the river Thames to Harleyford, and thence to Medmenham and also to Bisham.

After leaving Hurley the party went to Medmenham, but time not permitting a visit to the Abbey, the boat was turned and a stop was made at Bisham, where the Rev. W. Farrer described the Church with its famous Hoby monuments; and a letter was read dated Jan. 22nd, 1536, from Dr. Layton to Lord Cromwell, relating to the dissolution of Bisham Abbey:—

Hit may please your Lordeshipe to be advertised that we have taken th'assurance for the King. The Abbot is a veray simple man, the monkes of small lernyng and mucche lesse discretion; playte veray little, householde stufte none: but the Abbottes bede and one matteresse for two of his servants. I causede a bede to be borrowede in the towne and broughte into the Abbey for Dr. Carne and myself; in the lewe of hangyngs, bare walles throweout the house; cattell none but boughte this day and to morowe to the larder, saveyng a few mylche kyne not 12 in numbere.

In the garners not one bushell of whete, malte, or other grayne; vestimenttes small store, and not one good, for the Abbot hath made money of all the beste, and sold them at London; and evyn so the Church Playte, and is so good a husbunde that doubtless within one yere I juge verely he wolde have solde the house landes and all for whyte wyne, sugar, burage leves and seke (? sack) whereof he sippes nyghtly in his chamber tyll mydnyght.

Money to dispache the householde and monkes we must make of the rotten ropes and bells: all other thynges as well keytchyng stuff as other we shall leiffe. If these two thynges wilnot amounte to the dispache of the householde and monkes then we must sell the kyne and the plowe oxen and horse.

The Church we styr not, nor no part thereof. The whole of the grounde, barley with all kyndes of grayne, the goodlyeste demaynes that I have sene. Bycause hay harviste is now, we must retayne still all the carters and plowemen and so sett all thynges in order, and with expedition repaire unto your lordeshipe. This day we dispache the monkes for they be much desierouse to be gone, for yesterday when we were makynge sale of old vestimenttes within the Chapitre Howse then the monkes cryede a new marte in cloystre everie man bryngynge his cowle caste upon his nec to be solde and solde them in dede.

Thus Christe continew you in honoure and long lyffe.

By your servant,

RICH. LAYTON, Preste.

From Bissham, 22nd Junii,
To the Right Honourable
and my singular good Lorde,
The Lord Privey Seall.

The annual meeting was held on board, and the following appointments made for the ensuing year. The eight retiring members of the Council were re-elected, and the whole Council is constituted as follows:—Coningsby Disraeli, Dr. Baker, Rev. F. W. Bennitt, Col. Higgins Bernard, E. Corner, W. Crouch, W. A. Forsyth, R. C. Hazell, H. E. Luxmoore, J. O. Manton, F. W. Reader, Maj. Beauchamp Seymour, Capt. Stewart-Liberty, M.C., F. Skull, C. G. Watkins, Rev. V. L. Whitechurch.

The honorary officers are as follows:—Joint Secretaries, W. Bradbrook and W. J. Barnes. Treasurer, Col. F. W. Pixley, F.S.A. Editor of "Records," G. Eland. Auditors, W. Crouch and C. G. Watkins.

ADDITIONS TO MUSEUM AND LIBRARY.

Among the additions during the year 1923 may be noticed:—

Coins.

VARIOUS TOKENS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (Miss Grinnell, Mrs. Fountaine, the Misses J. and L. Hunt, Messrs. T. C. Foster and W. H. Evans).

ROMAN COINS DUG UP IN AYLESBURY (Mr. T. P. Pigott).

Extant Fauna.

CABINET OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS, including one Large Copper, *polyommatus dispar* (Mrs. G. M. Coales).

Fossils.

TURRILITES TUBERCULATUS, from lower chalk, Longwick (Longwick Council School).

RHYNCONELLA INCONSTANS, from lower kimmeridge, Waddesdon (Waddesdon Council School).

Sundries.

OLD BELLS, possibly ecclesiastical, illustrated in Mr. A. H. Cocks's "Church Bells of Buckinghamshire" (Mrs. J. T. Harrison).

MICROSCOPE, in case (Mr. W. Bradbrook).

The Library.

"THE BERNARDS OF ABINGTON AND NETHER WINCHENDON," by Mrs. Napier Higgins (Col. F. T. Higgins Bernard).

GEOLOGY OF THE COUNTRY ROUND AYLESBURY (The Geological Survey).

GEOLOGY OF THE COUNTRY ROUND BEACONSFIELD (Mr. James Berry).