

NOTES

CHALFONT ST. GILES

A brief note on the curious little memorial to Katherine Radcliffe (died 1660) in Chalfont St. Giles' Church may be of interest since its recent cleaning and preservation.

The memorial takes the unusual form of an oil painting on canvas of the Radcliffe arms, with an inscription beneath in a contemporary painted frame. It is noted in the Royal Commission's Inventory, where, however, it was thought to be on leather. (*Hist. Monks. Report I*, p. 81). It has also been supposed that this painting was a hatchment; but this is clearly not so, for the painting is in a square frame, although the arms, being those of a lady, are of course on a lozenge, and a hatchment never records age or date of death and there is never an inscription.

The arms are quarterly, 1st, Argent, two bendlets, engrailed sable, for Radcliffe or Ratcliffe, County Derby and Leicester. 2nd, Azure, two bars argent, a bend gules over all, also for Ratcliffe, another branch of the family. 3rd, Gules, three cross crosslets fitchy and a chief or, for Arden. An heiress of this family married a Stanley. 4th, azure a fess gules between three garbs or, for Sambach. (*Visitation of Bucks, 1634*, page 103). The lozenge is flanked by wreaths of palm; and below the arms, on a draped panel painted gold, is a short inscription recording the date of her death, 1660, and her age (she was only just twenty-one), with a pathetic little verse at the base.

“ From thy quick death conclude we must

The fairest flowers are gathered first.”

The painting is quite good in design and setting out, but is not of any particular merit. Cleaning has brought out the richness of the original gold and its brown shading, and has made clear the exact nature and

tinctures of the heraldry which was all but indecipherable before owing to accumulations of dirt and opaque decayed varnish. The poor condition of the canvas was due to the fact that it was never mounted on a stretcher, and at some time in order to save it, it had been painted down on to the deal boards backing the frame. These boards had subsequently shifted, further splitting the canvas and making the paint flake off.

The picture was undoubtedly repaired in this way and a good deal repainted (what a fatal love of "touching up" the Victorians had) in 1861 at the general restoration of the Church under George Street; a pencil note on the back of the frame says, "Removed from the Chancel 1861." The inscription commences: "Underneath this place lies interred the body," etc. So that when the Victorians shifted the memorial from the Chancel to the north aisle they also painted above the word "Underneath" the word "near," so as to be as truthful as possible! The memorial has been replaced in the Chancel. As much of the later repainting as possible has been removed and the canvas re-secured. The frame is contemporary with the painting, and has grotesque skulls and bones in the middle at the top and bottom, and other emblems of mortality, so dear to the 17th century mind, in the shape of hour-glasses at the sides.

Some writing in ink on the boards at the back appears to be contemporary with the painting, and is worth recording. It reads: "For Thomas Ratcliffe at Chalfont Esq., these, with a smal bundle." "These," I take to mean the deal boards, some of which were subsequently used to back the frame and canvas. The Ratcliffes lived at the Stone—now rebuilt, but containing some features from the older house, (see *Hist. Monts. Commrs. Report*, Vol. I., p. 83), and Anthony, Katherine's father, is said to have entertained Cromwell in the house after the battle of Aylesbury. He was an ardent Parliamentarian; and the year 1660 must have been a bitter one for him since he lost his daughter shortly after her 21st birthday; and the monarchy,

against which he had striven, was restored in the person of Charles II.

It may be noted that there are two small monuments of a similar type at Langley Marish. They are mural tablets of wood, also in contemporary frames, and painted in oil colours, one to Richard Hubert, second son of Ruchard Hubert, Kt., Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Charles II, died 1679. And the other to Dorothea, daughter of John King, Bishop of London, and wife of Sir Richard Hubert, Groom Porter to Charles I, died 1658.

E.C.R.

OAKLEY

An interesting fragment of carved and painted woodwork in the form of oak tracery recently came to light in Oakley Church. The Vicar, the Rev. J. Skinner, kindly allowed me to take one piece away after examination had suggested that it was likely to be of some interest and probably painted. Careful cleaning and treatment revealed a piece of oak tracery carved in the solid, extreme measurements, 2 feet 10 inches by 1 foot 3 inches, elaborately painted. The highest portions were in red with white roundels fairly closely spaced; the concave mouldings were green, powdered with little groups of 3 or 4 white spots, and the deepest concave parts of the tracery mouldings white, while the flat ground was in red, diapered with cinquefoils in white or cream painted by means of a stencil. Its date is probably mid 15th century; but it is less easy to identify the object of which it originally formed a part. The heaviness of the work, its peculiar shape, and the spacing of the mullion between two tracery heads are rather against its having come from the lower part of a rood screen. On the whole it seems most likely to have been part of a carved spandrel from the roof. Another fragment, painted with a shield (apparently argent charged with sable lions between a bend gules) certainly came from a roof. The bend has a charming little scroll in black on it.

DESTROYED MONUMENTS

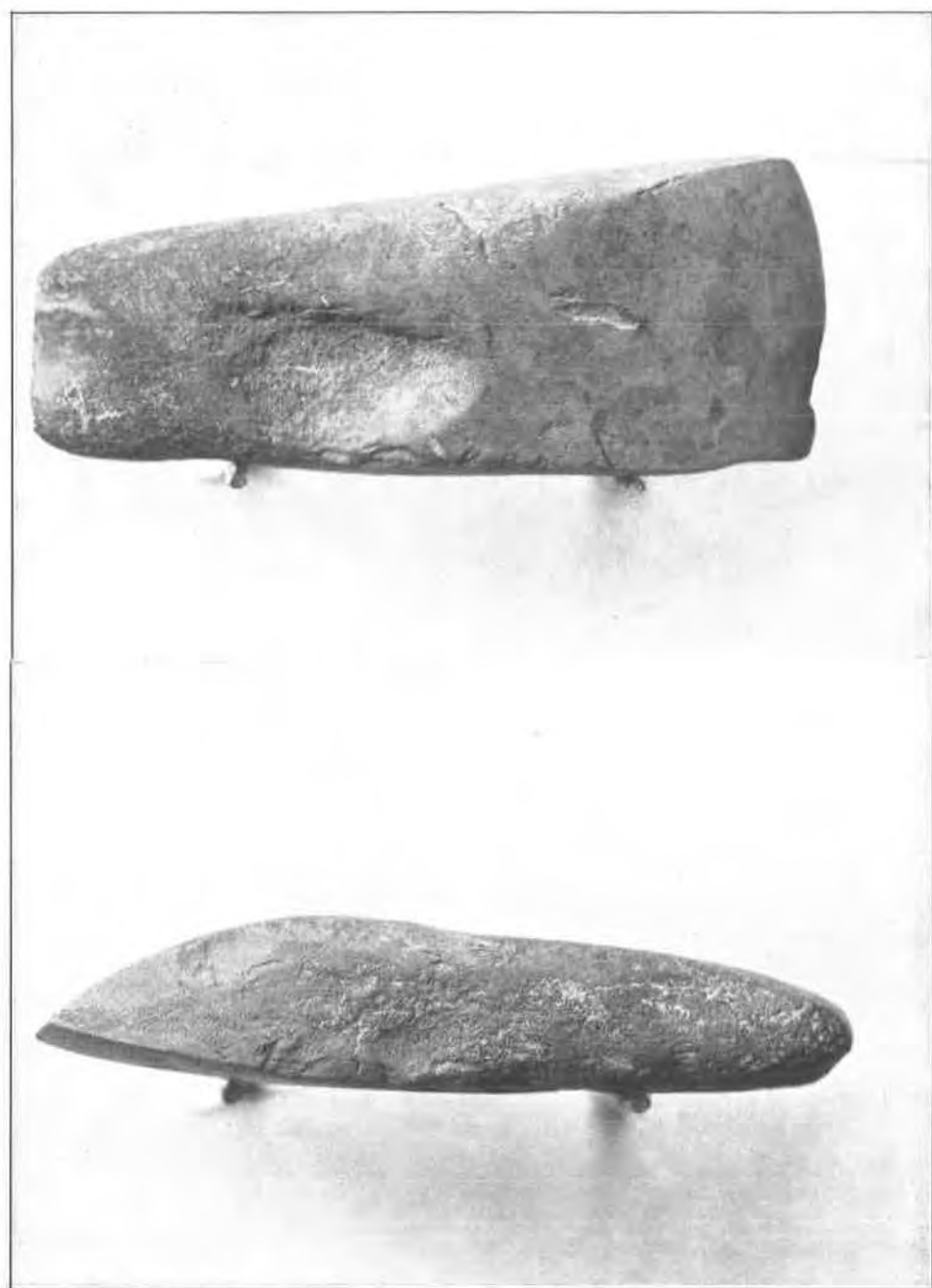
The old manor house at North Crawley (*Hist. Monts. Comm. Report II*, p. 221), has been pulled down. Its loss is to be deplored, as it was a complete stone manor house standing within a moat. In the course of demolition several fine stone fireplaces and other features not listed in the Royal Commission's account, came to light. We have lost many 17th century houses in Colnbrook as a result of a wholesale clearance order; and the Greyhound in Chalfont St. Peter will soon be the only house left standing in the village which is listed in the Commission's Inventory. The two early gabled houses, one with original bargeboard on the south-west side of the street have gone, likewise the archway to the Barrack Yard adjoining the house containing the mural paintings described in *Records of Bucks.* (Vol. xii, p. 47). This house itself, and also the Barrack Yard are likewise scheduled for early demolition. Unless some means of inducing local authorities to recondition rather than destroy old houses, there will be very little old property of this small type left in twenty-five years time. Its wholesale destruction raises a very serious threat to the whole character of the English village and small town. For while buildings may not be individually important artistically or archæologically, it is a collection of such places that form our English villages.

STONE ADZE FROM WENDOVER.

This interesting implement, of which flat and side views are illustrated, was picked up on the surface at Coombe Hill, Wendover.

It is of a distinctly Scandinavian type which Mr. Reginald Smith, of the British Museum, considers to be "either of the chambered barrow (2300-1800 B.C.)," "or cist period (1800-1600 B.C.), corresponding to our Early Bronze Age."

A good many Scandinavian implements are made of chert, as is this specimen, but it is not possible to say from what locality this was derived. Professor



CHERT IMPLEMENT FOUND AT COOMBE HILL, WENDOVER

Shetelig, of the Bergen Museum, Norway, to whom photographs have been submitted, says "in a wonderful way it resembles our Western Norsk forms."

The Measurements are:—

Extreme length, 4 1-16 inches.

Width of cutting edge, 1½ inches.

Greatest thickness, $\frac{7}{8}$ inches.

Except grinding to produce cutting edge, the whole of implement has been left unpolished.

E. HOLLIS.

SWORD AT SAUNDERTON

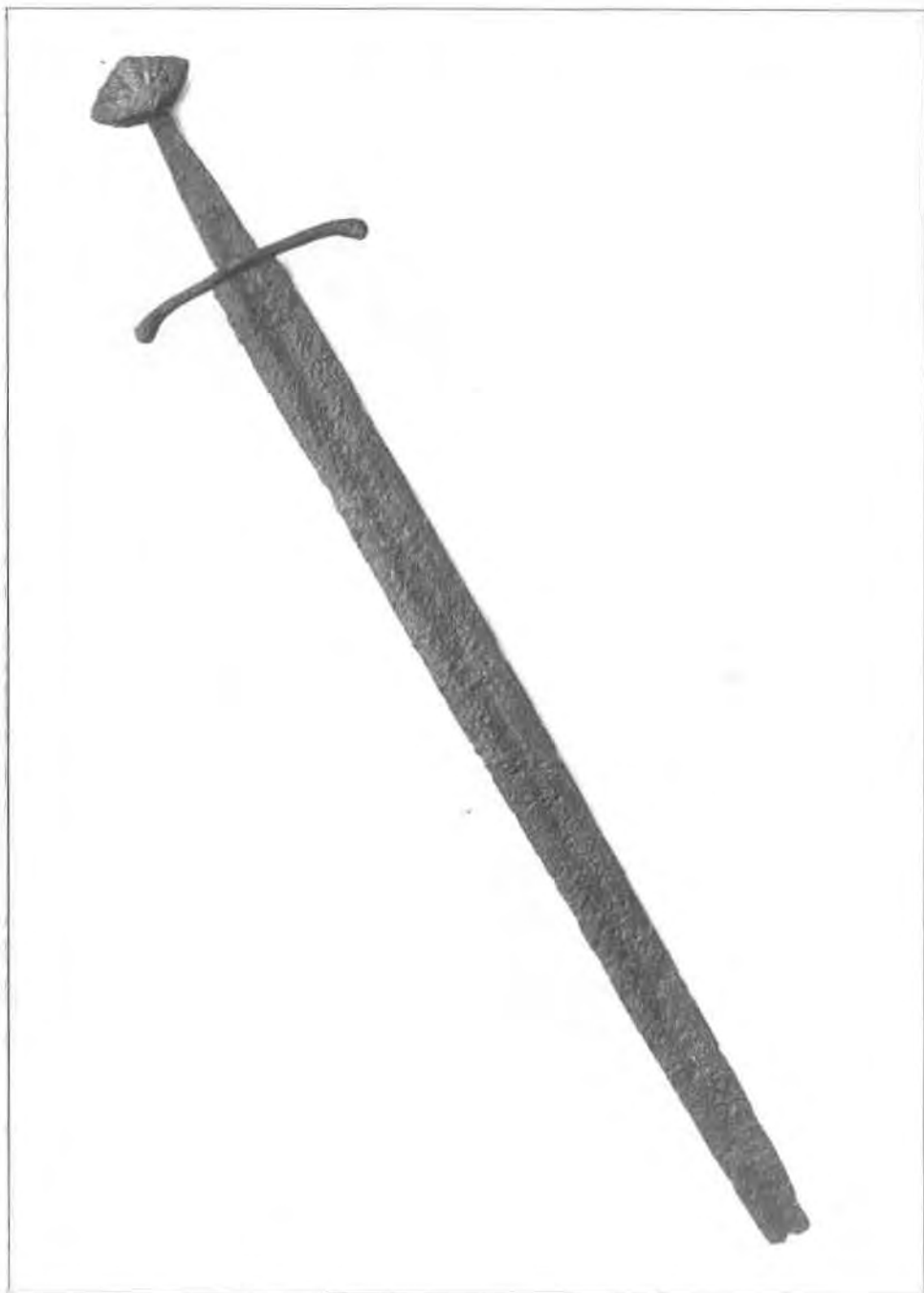
An interesting example of a medieval sword was recently turned up by the plough on the lower south-east slope of Lodge Hill, Saunderton Lee.

Mr. T. D. Kendrick, of the British Museum, has been good enough to examine the weapon and classifies it as a 13th or late 12th century type characterised by what is known as a "brazil-nut" pommel. He remarks on a somewhat similar specimen now in the Maidstone Museum, and illustrated in Laking's *European Armour and Arms*, Vol. 1, Fig. 106.

The point of the sword, as will be seen from the illustration, is missing, but having regard to the prolonged exposure of the weapon in the open, the sword is in remarkably good condition, and thanks to Mr. Kendrick's assistance, has now been properly cleaned and treated with a view to its future preservation.

The site from which the weapon was recovered lies 58 yards N. N.E. of the angle formed by two hedges in the S.W. corner of the Lee Green field; this field comprises the highest arable land on the south-eastern slope of Lodge Hill. The sword was at first discarded by the ploughman as waste metal, and it was due to the opportune presence of Mr. Morris, the owner of the land, that it was recognised at its true worth and accordingly preserved.

J. F. HEAD.



Sword found at Saunderton

BRASS AT PITSTONE

When digging a grave a few yards north-west of Pitstone Church, in the autumn of 1935, the sexton unearthed a small brass figure of a lady, twelve inches high, in quite a good state of preservation.

No inscription was found, but the costume and style of engraving enable one to assign it to the early 14th century (probably in the first quarter). This would make it the earliest brass in Buckinghamshire. It has been suggested that it represents a lady of the Neyrnut family.

This family held the Manors of Fleet Marston and Pitstone in 13th and 14th Centuries, and part of the Manor of Pitstone was named after them. The living was held by three of the name in succession; Walter Neyrnut, instituted as vicar in 1263, was succeeded by Fulk, and by Thomas in 1317, the latter on the presentation of Sir John Neyrnut, Knight, his father.

The brass has now been set into the pillar at north side of the chancel.

E. HOLLIS.



Early 14th Century brass at Pitstone