

THE BLEDLOW CROSS.

An account of this Cross, by the Rev. Arthur Baker, is given in the RECORDS, vol. I.—222; but as the following communication from Mr. Clarke, of Haddenham, contains some additional particulars on the subject, it will be read with interest. In a letter to the Rev. Charles Lowndes, Mr. Clarke says—

“ The Cross is situated above the Wainhill Hamlet, on the Chiltern range of hills on an estate belonging to Eton College; and the farm was in my father’s occupation as tenant and lessee for forty years from 1802.

“ The Cross itself was so completely overgrown at that time, that I have heard him say, he had held the farm for some years before he knew one existed, and merely discovered it by accidentally walking over it.

“ I have, however, been told by some of the old men in Bledlow, that the shepherds while tending their flocks many years since, were in the habit of clearing it out for amusement, but if so, it was evidently very imperfectly done.

“ Having always possessed something of a taste for Antiquities, about 25 years since I started a subscription among the parishioners and had it properly scoured, and once since I believe I had it done on my own account.

“ For some years past the steward of the College has liberally contributed to the scouring when necessary, and about three years since, the burser gave me directions to have it well done. It is now in very good order.

“ At that part of the hill the soil is thick, and the chalk consequently at a considerable depth from the surface, this of course diminishes the effect of the figure, except it be viewed in a direct line with the nave; it also lies at rather too low an angle to be well brought into view from the plain below, being too much in the plane of the eye.

A base, similar to the 'White Cliff,' would also very much improve its figure."

Its dimensions as given by Mr. Clarke, are—the nave 74 feet by 17 feet, the arms, or transepts, each 35 feet by 13 feet 6 inches.

It is extremely gratifying to find that this interesting relic of antiquity has been carefully preserved by Mr. Clarke and his father; otherwise by this time it might have been entirely obliterated. It will, however, be observed, by comparing its dimensions in Mr. Clarke's account with those given by Mr. Baker, that they do not agree. Mr. Baker measured the Bledlow Cross in 1848, and states that it then consisted of "four equal limbs, 30 feet by 15 feet each." From Mr. Clarke's account the dimensions appear to have been since enlarged. This must have been caused by the scourings which it has since undergone, and shows how necessary it is that this work should be performed with great care and judgment. Perhaps the most likely way to insure the proper performance of the work would be to make it an annual parochial custom, or a day of rejoicing, always taking care to have "the scouring" performed under the supervision of some competent person. The White-leaf Cross and the Bledlow Cross are perhaps the most remarkable and interesting antiquities in Buckinghamshire, and every possible means should be adopted to preserve them in their pristine integrity; and as they are so near to each other, what could be more easy and desirable than to have them both scoured on the same day?

Mr. Clarke suggests that a base similar to that at the White-leaf Cross should be added to the Bledlow Cross; but, I am sure he will see, from what has already been said that this would destroy its true character and rob it of its real value as an object of antiquity.¹ Its present form shews that neither of the crosses was copied from the other; and that the Bledlow Cross is probably the more ancient of the two.

W. H. K.