

# PARTICULARS OF THE RESTORATION OF QUANTON CHURCH.

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THIS church consists of a chancel, with vestry against north side, near the east end; a north chancel aisle; a nave with narrow north and south aisles; a south porch, and a western tower. The chancel aisle is called the Winwood aisle. It has an external entrance at the west end, where its width projects beyond that of the north aisle.

The original structure dated probably from about the year 1200, for caps and bases from sedilia, of about this date, were found built in the wall. These were in sufficiently good preservation to be re-used, and to dictate

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these may be looked upon, though dark in colour, as real amber, and in this he is supported by Mr. Maskelyne, keeper of the minerals at the British Museum. An interesting question then arises, whence come they? from over sea, or from our own Norfolk coast?"

the form and detail of the new sedilia. The chancel had been rebuilt apparently in the fourteenth century, a piscina and north doorway into the vestry still remaining *in situ*; but the remainder had been rebuilt in the sixteenth century, and in such an insecure manner, that the whole had become a complete ruin, incapable of reinstatement, and unfitted for reproduction. The new chancel, therefore, has been rebuilt in the style of the fourteenth century remains, the dimensions of the old chancel, 43 ft. 8 in. by 19 ft. 7 in., and its division into three bays, being preserved. The side windows are of three lights, and the east window of five, with cusped geometrical tracery. The roof is massive, of open hammer-beam construction.

In the roof of the vestry was a small low room, which it was impossible either to preserve or to reinstate. Apparently it had fallen, and been partly rebuilt in the last century.

The "Winwood" aisle, of the late Perpendicular period, has been preserved with only necessary reparation. This is now used as an organ chamber, the broad four-centred arch into the chancel having been opened out for this purpose.

A blocked opening in the north pier of the chancel arch has also been opened out. The rood-loft staircase, entered from the north aisle, has likewise been exposed to view.

The nave arcades, of remarkably elegant proportions, had gone seriously out of the perpendicular, each of them towards the south; and a clerestory had been built, or perhaps rebuilt, in the last century, vertically upon the leaning walls. These were now rapidly showing unmistakable signs of still further leaning. The nave roof, therefore, was supported and shored up, whilst the clerestory was removed, the arcades forced into their upright position, and secured, and the clerestory rebuilt. The nave roof, erected at the time of the clerestory, although of oak, was of poor material, and of construction insufficient to carry properly the lead covering, or still less to afford any support to the failing walls. This has now given place to a new tye-beam roof of higher pitch and of more massive construction, covered, like the chancel, with roofing tiles.

The aisles, likewise, have been successively rebuilt, with the old windows of the late florid type replaced exactly in their old position. In the south wall of the south aisle, near the east end, are two piscinæ. One of them is formed with a small angle shaft or mullion in the jamb of a window of earlier date and smaller size than the present windows. This has been reinstated as before. It is evident from this remnant that the aisles (with roofs originally of steep lean-to form) were partially rebuilt, and their walls raised and finished with parapets, at the end of the fifteenth century, when the nearly flat roofs covered with lead were formed. These roofs have been renewed, and the lead recast for their covering. The south porch has been rebuilt as nearly as possible as before. On the right hand side of this doorway a very perfect holy water stoup was discovered; it has been carefully divested of all mortar, plaster, etc., and now presents a most perfect and interesting object. A blocked doorway in the north aisle has been opened.

The tower, principally of the fifteenth century work, has a crippled arch leading from the nave; one-half of it being wider than the other, and of different radius, and apparently of a different date, though of the same detail as the other half. The foundations generally being very bad, had doubtless given rise to various rebuildings from time to time.

Fragments of the ancient oak stalls remain, sufficient to enable the carver closely to keep to their pattern in the new, which at present are of like scantling with the old but perfectly plain. It is desirable, if possible, to incorporate some of these fragments into the new work, in order to transmit their true character, and to give evidence of their history.

The new reredos consists of five equal canopied arches for the reception of three subject paintings or bas-reliefs—the three central arches being without shafts, and made to form one panel for the principal subject.

The body of the church will shortly be fitted with open deal benches, standing on the wood floors level with the pavement. Hot-water apparatus has been fitted up for warming, and the church, together with the schools and rectory adjoining, are lighted with the new air-gas, at the cost of the present patron.

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE CHURCH,  
AND HISTORY OF QUANTON.

BY THE REV. C. LOWNDES, M.A., F.R.A.S.

THIS interesting old Church, picturesquely situated at the foot of Denham Hill, and at the extreme east end of the village, is dedicated to the blessed Virgin, or, as some suppose, to the "Exaltation of the Holy Cross." The feast of the "Exaltation of the Holy Cross" is celebrated on the 14th day of September, in remembrance of the honour paid to it on its discovery by St. Helena in the fourth century; and the village feast, which is almost invariably celebrated on the day of the dedication of the Church, is annually held on the same day. It has therefore been thought that this latter dedication of the Church has some connection with the ancient cross in the centre of the village; but there is no record or tradition to prove that such was the case. At Hogshaw, close by, there was a Preceptory of the Knights Hospitallers of S. John, and they no doubt built the Church, and probably erected the cross. In almost every town or village a cross was erected in the market place, on the village green, or in some other place of common resort. These crosses were originally very plain and simple, but afterwards they were ornamented, and later still elaborately decorated. At the town crosses, banns were often published and marriages solemnized before justices of the peace. Our Society has published an account of the Quanton Cross in Vol. iii., page 153, of the RECORDS.

There is a tradition, that the original site fixed upon for building Quanton Church was at Denham, on a hill still called Church Hill; and that whenever an attempt was made to lay the foundation, the stones were miraculously and immediately removed, by some mysterious agency in the night, and carried to the site where the present edifice was afterwards erected.

The Chancel has been restored in the most substantial and beautiful manner, upon the exact site of the old building, and with the use of every portion of the old material which could be made available for the purpose.

Almost every trace of the old windows had disappeared, but by a careful search amongst the ruins of the old walls, sufficient fragments were discovered to guide the architect in his choice of style, both for the windows and the Sedilia. The former are now filled with cusped geometrical tracery of the fourteenth century; and the latter dates back to about A.D. 1200. The east window has been filled with stained glass, the work of Messrs. Lavers, Barraud, and Westlake, to the memory of A. R. Chalk, Esq., the father of the present patron and curate, the Rev. Thomas Chalk. The subjects in the tracery, are the Almighty, the emblems of the four evangelists, and the five greater prophets. In the upper compartments are—The descent from the Cross; The entombment; Resurrection; “He is not here, He is risen;” “Rabboni.” In the lower—“Lazarus, come forth;” “Roll away the stone from the grave;” “Thy brother shall rise again;” “Lord, if Thou hadst been here,” etc.; “Jesus wept.”

The design is grand in conception and most artistically carried out. The figures are thoroughly well drawn, and the colouring most delicate. A brass on the south wall, just over the reading-desk, states that the window was erected by the widow of the above A. R. Chalk, Esq. Another beautiful window, by the same firm, is about to be placed on the south side, to the memory of Mrs. Chalk, who has died since the erection of the east window. The subject will be, Christ blessing little children. There are four very handsome brass gas coronæ in the choir, the gift of members of the same family.

In the year 1862, a large and handsome stained glass window was inserted in the south aisle, in memory of Thomas Bett, Esq., and family, by his last surviving daughter. The subjects are, The Annunciation, The Crucifixion, and the appearance to Mary after the Resurrection; sacred emblems and other devices filling up the tracery. The window is the work of Messrs. Warrington and Son.

The north chancel aisle was doubtless, originally, a chantry chapel for singing masses for the dead, for, during the restoration, the remains of a Baldachin, or canopy over an altar, were discovered at the east end. This aisle is now called the Winwood Aisle, in memory of Richard Winwood, whose name is better preserved and perpetuated by the almshouses which he founded

and endowed. When the family erected a tomb to his memory in this aisle, they destroyed the altar, leaving only the enrichment of the canopy, which so pulverized, on being touched, that it could not be preserved. This monument has been removed to the west end of the south aisle.

After the Winwoods came the Dormers, of Lee Grange, who completely shut the Winwoods out of the church by placing an enormous monument in the north chancel aisle arch, so as to block it up, and cut off that aisle from the chancel entirely. It projected some five feet into the chancel, with a huge iron railing in front, and occupied, with another monument belonging to the same family, almost the whole of the north side of the chancel. These two monuments have now been placed in the tower arch, which has been opened out, and the west doorway closed, so as to form, as it were, a mortuary chapel. They look remarkably well there; and by this arrangement, at least fourteen extra sittings have been obtained in the chancel.

The Pigott monuments have been grouped in the north chancel aisle. The mural tablet, with the figures of Bett, his wife, and four children, is fixed on the south wall of the south aisle. This monument is, perhaps, the most interesting of any of them, Bett having been formerly rector of the parish, and one of the original translators of the Bible.

These monuments were all most carefully removed at a time when it was feared that the chancel, from its terribly dilapidated condition, must fall to the ground.

The brasses are most of them in very fine condition, and have been removed from the floor, a position which threatened, from the traffic over them, the utter annihilation of the figures and inscription. They are now let into the walls of the chancel. Three are in the back of the sedilia, and two in the north wall. These brasses, together with the monuments, are fully described and illustrated by Dr. Lipscombe (who was himself a native of Quainton), in his "History of Buckinghamshire."

Near the *Lynch* Gate there was formerly an elm-tree of such enormous girth (fifty-three feet), that fifty persons could sit round it. It was blown down in a tempest, November 10, 1810, causing a feeling of consternation,

as a portend of evil, through the whole village. The ancient and invariable custom, when a corpse was brought for interment, was to rest it for a few minutes beneath the branches before it was carried into the church.

The custom of strewing the floor with rushes and sedge was continued in Quainton Church until 1781; but the custom was superseded by placing a new floor of boards under the old open seats.\*

This church was reopened after restoration, and an addition to the churchyard consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, on October 25th, 1877.

Adjoining the church are the almshouses, erected in the year 1687 by Richard Winwood, Esq., son and heir of Sir Ralph Winwood, knight, who was Secretary of State and a Privy Counsellor to King James I., and author of "Memorials" which bear his name. He owned considerable property in Bucks, and resided occasionally at Denham Court, an ancient manor house, formerly the seat of the Iwardbys; the site is now occupied by a moated farm-house. The almshouses are substantially built of brick, and contain eight separate tenements under one roof. They were originally endowed for the reception of four poor widowers and four poor widows; each to receive 1s. 6d., afterwards increased to 4s. per week, a load of beechwood, and a long cloak of strong brown cloth for both men and women, on the sleeve of which was borne a brass badge, with the arms of the founder.

Quainton was formerly more thickly populated than at the present time, and, though somewhat deserted, it had many residents of note. There was Sir Richard Pigott, who was member for the county in the reign of King James I. On one occasion he made such a violent speech, abusing the Scots as thieves and murderers, without even standing up or taking off his hat, that the House was so amazed, that the members could do nothing but stare at each other. His behaviour was reported to the King, who was exceedingly enraged at his not having been stopped. He was ordered to kneel down in the House, and the Speaker, his brother-in-law,

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\* Bean haulm at Christmas, and wheat straw at Easter, were almost as constantly introduced as evergreens for the decoration of country churches.

Sir Edward Phillips, who had married a Miss Pigott, dismissed him from his office of Knight of the Shire. He was confined in the Tower, and was some years after buried in Hogshaw Church, which has been pulled down more than one hundred years ago. There was also the Lady Saye and Sele, about whom there is a very interesting account in "Chambers' Book of Days." She lived to be considerably over ninety, and had the registers in Castlethorpe Church mutilated in order to preserve the secret of her age. Her second husband was a Mr. Pigott. She married three times—the first time for love, the second for money, and the third for rank; and when over ninety, said, she thought of beginning again in the same order. She was, indeed, a most extraordinary person, and strange tales of her eccentricities still exist. Pope and Addison were numbered amongst her friends. She left £8000 in charities to the parishes of Quainton and Grendon Underwood.

Then there was the old Judge Dormer, whose monument I have referred to, and of whom there is a tradition, that, when the Assizes are held in Aylesbury, he is still to be seen driving from his old Grange along the road.

Quainton was also celebrated in olden times for the races which were held in the open field below the village. I alluded to these races in a paper on Doddershall, read before the Society in the year 1864, and printed in Vol. iii., p. 130, of the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

During the civil wars in the time of Charles I., this part of the country was frequented by both the Royalists and Parliamentarians. In a lumber room in one of the old farmhouses, the sword and helmet of an old Puritan warrior were found, recalling the time when their owner probably died there of the wounds he had received in one of the conflicts which were constantly taking place.

On Christmas Eve, 1753,\* about two thousand people from the village and neighbourhood met at midnight in the rector's garden, with torches and lanterns, to watch for the budding of the thorn, which is said to be a true and veritable descendant of the famous Glastonbury Thorn. Now, the peculiarity of this thorn is, that it buds on the 24th of December in each year, ready to be in full

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\* From the "Gentleman's Magazine."



bloom on Christmas Day, and to die off at night. The object of the meeting was to decide between "Old Style and New Style."

Previous to 1753 a confusion of dates prevailed, consequent on the different methods of computing time. In order to correct this error, an alteration to the extent of eleven days was necessary to be made. By the statute of the 24th of George II., it was enacted that the natural day next following the 2nd of September should be reckoned the 14th of September, and the several days succeeding the 14th of September should be reckoned in numerical order, according to the order and succession of the days used in the present calendar.

Hence we have Old May Day as well as May Day; Old Michaelmas as well as New Michaelmas; and the like of other old and new days in the calendar. So great was the ignorance of the people, that they were under the impression that Government, by altering the calendar, had taken some advantage of them, and a cry arose, "Give us back our eleven days."

At Quainton, it is said, that great superstition prevailed on the subject, and much discontent. It was determined to settle the question, not by the provisions of an Act of Parliament, but by an appeal to the laws of nature. Christmas Day, 1753 (new style), was to be the day to prove whether the Act of 24th George II. did really alter the time or not.

It was therefore agreed that if the thorn in the rector's garden showed signs of budding on the 24th of December (new style), at midnight, then, both by the laws of man and laws higher, the next day would be the true Christmas Day.

But the thorn did not show any signs of budding. It was therefore resolved, that the next day was not the true and proper Christmas Day. It was not kept, either by the attendance of the people at the services of the church, or in the usual festivities.

It is further stated that so deep-rooted was this aversion to the new Christmas Day, that on Old Christmas Day Divine service was performed in this and the neighbouring churches, in order to appease the people, who, on this the usually-appointed day, kept Christmas festivities as in the "good old times" of their fathers.