

Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1885.

THE Annual Excursion and Meeting of this Society took place on the 25th August, 1885. The gathering included gentlemen from all parts of the county and beyond it, a number of ladies, and the following officers of the Society, viz., the Rev. R. H. Pigott and Mr. John Parker, F.S.A. (Hon. Secs.), Mr. R. Gibbs (Hon. Librarian and Curator), Mr. J. Williams (Hon. Treasurer), and Mr. T. Horwood (Auditor).

The members met at Aylesbury, and from thence went by road to Whitchurch. The first place visited was the site of the Castle of Bolebec. The Rev. G. T. Medd, Vicar of Whitchurch, supplied the following notes on this castle :—

“On the west side of the ancient village of Whitchurch (Buckinghamshire), in Edward the Confessor’s time called ‘Wicherche,’ is the site of the castle built by the great Norman family De Bolebec. The land about was given by William the Conqueror to one of the De Bolebecs, who was some relative of William I. The castle was erected, as far as I can gather, early in the twelfth century, about A.D. 1105, and was surrounded by a moat. The place for the drawbridge is now clearly made out, and part of the moat water is now represented by a small pond near where the drawbridge was. Grove, the historian, calls the site of De Bolebec Castle one of the curiosities of Bucks. The castle was strongly fortified, and had its ‘outer baileys,’ where the dependents of Hugh de Bolebec and his successors lived. Near the castle there is said to be a Saxon burial ground, but I believe the place taken for a Saxon burial ground is the north outer bailey of the old stronghold. After the De Bolebecs vanished from the scene the old castle was taken possession of by the De Veres, Earls of Oxford, and in the seventeenth century it was much knocked about by the Parliamentary cannon under one of Cromwell’s leaders, the De Veres being staunch adherents of Charles I., and it was about this time, 1642, or a year after, that a subterranean passage was discovered leading from the Castle Hill to an old house in the village. This ancient building is called ‘The Priory House.’ Near the moat of the castle are two excellent springs of water—one called ‘The Fair Alice,’ for legend says a fair Alice De Bolebec derived much benefit from drinking the spring water. The water still flows away at the foot of the old tree. The castle was partly dismantled after the Restoration, 1662, and it soon became a ruin. Part of the castle walls were used for building walls in the village. There is an interesting account of the noble family of De Bolebec in the RECORDS OF BUCKS, Vol. I., page 246.”

WHITCHURCH CHURCH.

Before returning to the vehicles the party visited the church (St. John the Evangelist), which was found to well repay inspection. The following particulars of this church, condensed from Sheahan’s “History of Bucks,” are given :—

“It is a large Gothic edifice (originally Early English, but much altered), consisting of a tower, nave, side aisles, chancel, and south porch.

The tower is embattled, and contains a clock, peal of bells, and a small bell. In the handsome west front facing the village is a deeply recessed moulded Early English doorway, with slender three-quarter columns, foliated capitals, and an architrave with corbels of human heads. Above it is a recessed decorated window, and on each side of it a lofty, well-proportioned niche, with crochets, canopied head, and a short pedestal in the centre of the base. A sculptured bracket for a statue remains in the centre of the window at the bottom, terminating underneath in a corbelled head. In the next stage is a lofty niche, partly hidden by the dial of the clock. The porch is gable-roofed, and has a moulded arched doorway with a niche above it, and another above the inner door. The tower communicates with the nave and aisles by three arches. The arcades of four lofty arches, which divide the aisles, are supported on one side by octagonal, and on the other by circular pillars. The oak roofs are visible. At the east end of the south aisle was a side or chantry chapel, which is indicated by the piscina and brackets still remaining. The pews are regular, and some of the old oak benches, with fleur-de lis ends, remain. The chancel arch is pointed, and on the right is a trefoiled niche. The chancel is Early Decorated, and contains much that is interesting, including the sedilia, piscina, old oak stalls, and fragments of old coloured glass. Lying under the tower are fragments of the wooden rood-screen, exhibiting some rich decorated work. At the east end of the north aisle is a marble tablet (now concealed from view) containing a long Latin inscription to Chief Justice Sir Edward Smythe, who died in 1682. There are other interesting slabs; three brass plates in the floor inscribed to members of the Scott family of 'Crisloe;' and on the north side of the nave a large white marble mural tablet, erected to the memory of Mr. John Westcar, of Creslow, who died in 1833, at the age of 84. On the tablet is sculptured in relief a male figure, leaning on a long staff, an ox standing beside him, and three sheep laid in the foreground. Mr. Westcar was a celebrated grazier, and an ox fed by him and exhibited at Smithfield in 1799, gained the prize, and was sold for £100. It weighed 241 stone, 3 pounds."

CRESLOW MANOR HOUSE AND DESECRATED CHURCH.

From Whitchurch the members proceeded to Creslow Manor House, where they were most hospitably entertained. The Rev. R. H. Pigott having made a few remarks on the history of the place, Mr. W. R. Rowland was kind enough to conduct the visitors over the house. It is of the time of Edward III., but alterations were made in it in the fifteenth century, and further and great alterations took place in the time of Charles I., of which period are the plaster ceilings and some square windows. The crypt or cellar, which is excavated in the limestone rock, excited great interest. It is entered by a flight of stone steps, and is about twelve feet square. Attention was directed to the roof, which is a good specimen of light Gothic vaulting, and is supported by arches springing from four short columns, groined at their intersections, and ornamented with carved flowers and bosses—the central one being about ten feet from the floor. From the crypt the visitors were conducted into the "charnel house" or "dungeon," in which were found human bones and skulls, "dug up" (according to Sheahan) "in the ground around the site of the church." Having emerged from the lower chambers, the visitors were shown the upper apartments, and in ascending the stairs attention was drawn to the fact that portions of the balustrade of the staircase are removable, and the explanation offered on this structural peculiarity was, "that on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth visiting the house, flambeaux were placed in the sockets." Many of the visitors gained access to the tower, from which a good view of the surrounding country is obtained. More than twenty years ago, the Rev. Mr.

Kelke tells us (RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Vol. I., page 267), four gables were taken down, before which, he says, this old mansion was nearly twice its present size. It has been moated and slightly fortified. The Norman Lord of Creslow was Edward Sarisberi, and at that period from eighty to hundred souls probably lived on the Manor. The Knights Hospitallers had possession of the estate at the time of the suppression of religious houses, but how they became possessed of it is not recorded. Subsequently the pastures were utilized by the Crown, and in 1635 Charles I. granted them to Cornelius Holland, afterwards one of the regicides. At the Restoration, Holland was attainted, and the lands forfeited, eventually passed to Thomas, Lord Clifford, and his heirs male. The Rev. R. H. Pigott stated that Holland desecrated the church, and also that of Quarrendon. The former building stands near the mansion, and the nave is now used as a coachhouse. The last rector, the Rev. Thomas Davis, was presented by Queen Mary, in 1554; and upon his voiding the living at the accession of Elizabeth, that Queen took into her hands the spiritualities of this parish, which were annexed to and merged in the temporalities. When the church ceased to be presented to as a rectory, it is probable the building was disused for worship. The inhabitants have since attended the church at Whitchurch, and buried their dead there.

Before leaving the Manor, Canon Evetts expressed the best thanks of the Society to Mr. Rowland for his hospitable reception, and the favour shown them in conducting them over these interesting buildings.

SIR JOHN SHORNE'S WELL.

The members proceeded by way of North Marston to Claydon. It had been intended to alight at North Marston, and visit the church and Sir John Shorne's well, but as the company were over-due at Sir Harry Verner's, it was decided to omit this part of the day's programme. The following is a summary of an account of Sir John Shorne, which was to have been given at Marston, but was delivered by Mr. Parker, literary secretary of the Society, at Claydon House:—

Mr. Parker, in treating of the "holy well" at North Marston, and its associations, observed that the subject had already been written upon by Mr. Kelke in 1859 (Vol. II. of THE RECORDS OF THIS SOCIETY), and by Dr. Sparrow Simpson in 1858—9 (*Ib.*, Vol. III.). He related that "Master" (otherwise called "Sir" or "Saint") John Shorne (though never canonized) produced, according to legend, a perennial spring by tapping the soil with his staff, the waters being reported to cure ague and gout. The water, according to the analysis by Dr. Bernay, was "somewhat medicinal," and he (Mr. Parker) had been able to detect a flavour of iron on tasting it while passing through the village that day. Shorne, who was probably a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, was shown to have been rector of Monks Risborough in 1289, and to have become rector of North Marston in the following year. He directed by his will that his body should be buried in the chancel of North Marston Church, and there it was placed in a shrine, to which many pilgrims resorted, the saint becoming greatly celebrated owing to an extraordinary story that he had conjured the devil into his boot. So extensive were the offerings at the shrine that they were related to have averaged £500 a year—equivalent to a sum exceeding £5,000 in the present day—and the present chancel was said to have been built from the money thus realized. The shrine was mentioned in Bishop Latimer's sermon, together with that of "Our Lady of Walsingham," the latter being one in the greatest repute in England. The widely extended popularity of Shorne was shown by his effigy, with the characteristic imprisonment of the devil in one of his boots, being found on the rood-screen in the church of Cawston, Norfolk (*circa* 1450) on that of the church of Gateley, in the same county (*circa* 1480), on

a panel at Sudbury, Suffolk (*circa* 1550), and on a rood-screen at Suffield, Norfolk (*circa* 1450); there was also a representation of the "miracle" on stained glass at Bury St. Edmunds. At the east end of the south aisle of North Marston Church there were vestiges of an altar, probably dedicated to Shorne, whose image had presumably been placed there, for the bracket of a niche at the side of the altar closely resembled the bracket on Gateley screen. The chamber over the vestry was believed to have been used by the priest who had charge of the shrine, which, however (*circa* 1478), was removed to St. George's Chapel, Windsor. At the meeting of the British Archæological Association held on the 20th May last, Dr. Simpson read a paper on a Latin office of Master John Shorne in a MS. at the British Museum found by Mr. E. Scott (Sloane MS. 389). It contained the entire office of hymn, versicles, and responses, and was remarkable as having been composed for an uncanonized man. There was also a copy of verses to be said "when in jeopardy of death." Mr. Parker explained that he had endeavoured to obtain the permission of Dr. Simpson to have the office printed in the RECORDS of this Society, but the reply, which he read, was to the effect that this could not be done, as a copy of the document was to appear in the quarterly publication of the British Archæological Society. It was added that a rood-screen painting of Master Shorne had been found by a friend of Dr. Simpson in Devonshire, and Mr. Parker has since ascertained that the painting is at Woolborough Church, in that county.

CLAYDON HOUSE.

On arriving at Claydon House, the company received a cordial welcome from Sir Harry Verney, Captain Verney, R.N., and Mrs. Verney. They first visited the church, and then entering the house, were very hospitably entertained at luncheon, after which Mr. Williams, the hon. treasurer, submitted his report. He stated that the Society began the year with a balance of £2 3s. 5d. The receipts were—Subscriptions, £43 4s.; sale of books, £1 6s.; sundries, £6 3s.; giving a total for the year of £52 16s. 5d. The payments were—Printing, £2 7s. 6d.; rent, £5; payment on account of RECORDS, £25; odd accounts, £6; sundries, £5; leaving a balance in hand of £8 14s. 4d. That was so far satisfactory that it was a higher balance than last year, but they were not out of debt when they closed the year, as they owed their printer some £15 or £20 for the RECORDS. The present balance was something like £28, which would clear off the debt for the past year, and with the subscriptions which he hoped they would receive before the end of the year, they might look forward to being in a better position. They had a very fair number of new subscribers, and he would mention that it had been contemplated to raise the subscription from 6s. to 10s. They had not really been out of debt for some years, and 6s. was a very small sum for a county Society like this. He thought the committee and members ought to take it into serious consideration whether the higher scale of subscription should not be adopted.

Sir Harry Verney then read the paper written by Lady Verney on Claydon House, which appears in this number of the RECORDS, and which was listened to with great interest.

At the conclusion of the reading of the paper, Canon Evetts moved a vote of thanks to Sir Harry Verney for his hospitality, and for his kindness and geniality towards the Society, which was seconded by the Rev. R. H. Pigott; and, after hearing some interesting remarks from Sir Harry Verney on archæological points in connection with the locality, the members were conducted over the house, and inspected the various treasures of art and literary remains, which make this historic country seat famous in Buckinghamshire. This inspection concluded the day's proceedings.

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WARREN, Rev. J., Stowe Vicarage,
 Buckingham
WAY, Mr. B. R. W., Denham Place,
 Uxbridge
WELLER, Mr. G., The Plantation,
 Amersham
WELLS, Rev. H. M., Prestwood, Great
 Missenden
WRSTFIELD, Mr. F. J., High Wycombe
- WETHERED, Mr. L. W.**, Stubbings
 House, Maidenhead
WETHERED, Mr. O. P., Marlow
***WETHERED, Mr. T. O.**, Seymour Court,
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WHIGHAM, Mr. J., 52, Cromwell Road,
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WILD, Mr. F., Chalfont St. Giles,
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WILKINS, Mr. EDWD., High Wycombe
WILLIAMS, Mr. J., Aylesbury
WILLIAMS, Rev. T., Aston Clinton
WILLIAMS, Rev. T. J., Waddesdon,
 Aylesbury
WILSON, Sir SAMUEL, Hughenden
 Manor, High Wycombe
***WOOD, Rev. JOHN**, Wolverton
WOBLEY, Mr. JOHN, Stony Stratford
WYATT, Rev. C. F., Broughton, Ban-
 bury
- YOUNG, Mr. JAMES**, Aylesbury
YOUNG, Rev. H. T., Mallard's Court,
 Stokenchurch