

The Proceedings of the Bucks Architectural and Archæological Society,

FOR THE YEAR 1892.

THE EXCURSION IN MID BUCKS.

On Tuesday, July 19th, 1892, the members of the Bucks Archæological and Architectural Society arranged an excursion to Wingrave, Wing, and Stewkley. Unfortunately the weather proved unpropitious. The journey was accomplished in carriages from Aylesbury.

WINGRAVE CHURCH.

The members drove first to Wingrave Church. The Rector, the Rev. T. G. Lockhart, gave them a cordial welcome, and read the following paper:—

“By request I have prepared a short paper on the history of our Church. The Church at Wingrave is dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul. It consists of chancel, nave, north and south aisles, south porch and west tower. Internally from chancel to tower it is 107 ft. long; nave and aisles 44 ft. wide; chancel 14 ft. The building itself is picturesque, in the Early English and Perpendicular styles. The chancel roof is of a steep pitch, and was built in a manner more domestic than ecclesiastical, probably fourteenth century work. It had a tie beam and plaster ceiling, with the general accompaniment of whitewash. This has been replaced with a panelled ceiling of oak boarding and ribs, with some carving in bosses. The present east window was the gift of Miss Butt, niece of the previous Vicar. The small but very interesting lancet light of the north wall is one of the original windows of the chancel which we found blocked on the inside. The doorway was also built up. The north arcades in the chancel, and perhaps other portions of the existing fabric are not later than the middle of the twelfth century. The nave as originally completed—the nave of the fourteenth century—had a high pitched roof, the line of which can be traced inside the Church over the tower arch, and a piece of the weather moulding, showing its exact height, exists outside in the east wall of the tower. The north and south doorways in the aisles, and probably the whole of the belfry stage of the tower, are of the same period. In the following century (the fifteenth) the clerestory was reared with its beautiful range of lofty windows, and its flatter roof enriched by battlements and pinnacles. Architecturally, the building assumed the same form then in which we now see it. The carved stone corbels in the nave clerestory, upon which stand the figures of the Twelve Apostles, are supposed to have belonged to the earlier roof and were re-used in the later work; the grotesques and heads, as well as the foliage, having an earlier and ruder character, quite distinct from that of the figures in the fifteenth century woodwork. The beautiful arch at the west end of the nave,

built early in the thirteenth century, remains to show not only how good the work was that was done at that time, but that the building was then as long it is now, and had a tower. The font is evidently of a very early period, and, it is thought, may have belonged to a building of which there are no other remains at present visible. The bell cot on the east gable of the nave originally carried a Sanctus bell, but the present bell bears the inscription A.C. 1678, and was probably put up to be used as a parson's bell for ringing in just before the beginning of service. The table in the vestry was the Holy Communion Table, probably seventeenth century work; as will be seen, it is of excellent workmanship. Having very briefly noticed the more interesting parts of the Church, perhaps I may add that in the restoration work care has been taken, as far as practicable, to reproduce the ancient details. At the same time we rejoice in additions made which serve the purposes of beauty and utility.

"We now have an organ transept, choir and priests' vestries, a new rood screen in the chancel arch, which had to be widened for its reception. The floor of the chancel has been relaid with encaustic tiles. The choir stalls and fittings and all the interior woodwork of the Church, are of oak, the windows throughout have been reglazed, and a very efficient heating apparatus has been fixed with the most satisfactory results. The building contains sittings for 412 people. The whole cost of the restoration was £4,600, £150 of which remains unpaid. The tower remains to be restored, the interior part being in a very dilapidated and dangerous condition, while the upper part is wanting in size. This arises chiefly from the fact that it remains as it was in the fourteenth century, before the clerestory was reared against it. We hope to rebuild and raise the tower, allowing sufficient height for a ringing chamber, the floor of which would be placed just above the tower arch. This will allow the ground floor to be made the baptistery. The cost of this work will be £1,100. It remains now for me to thank you for your kind attention to this imperfect little sketch of our Church. I welcome you in the name of our Divine Master and parishioners, and trust this visit will prove pleasant and satisfactory to you all."

WING CHURCH.

Leaving Wingrave, where refreshments were kindly provided at the Rectory by the Rev. T. G. Lockhart, the members drove to Wing, and spent some time in the Church, unique in Buckinghamshire, and certainly the most remarkable ecclesiastical building in the County. The Vicar, the Rev. F. H. Tatham, read the following paper:—

"The Church of Wing," says Mr. G. Gilbert Scott, in his essay on Early English Church Architecture, 'is a good example of a Church which must have been erected very shortly after the conversion of England, and is quite basilican in its character. It illustrates by its severity and its classical proportions (which are sufficiently obvious in spite of later alterations) the "Roman" manner of the early days of Saxon Christianity.' It possesses what may be said to be the three distinctive marks of all the Churches of the Roman Missionaries, or their immediate successors in this country, viz.,—1. The apsidal termination. 2. A confessional crypt (we know of this by description at Canterbury, by the existence of the crypt itself at Brixworth, Repton, and Wing; or by later crypts which are successors of early 'confessions,' at York, Worcester, Winchester, Gloucester, and many others might be named. Intended originally for the repose of the bodies of martyrs who had witnessed a good confession by their deaths,

but which ceased to serve this purpose when the system of placing relics in shrines above ground came into vogue). 3. The wide chancel arch, the successor of the triumphal arch of the basilica.

"Wing Church consisted, in its original form, of a nave (whether the aisles formed part of the original structure is open to question) and a polygonal apse of seven sides. The angles of the apse are ornamented externally with narrow flat pilasters united above by semicircular arches. The floor of the apse is elevated upon the crypt and ascended by a flight of steps which extend into the nave, giving the chancel, when viewed from the Church itself, a stately and solemn appearance. The triumphal arch is almost as wide as the Church itself and lofty in proportion. The altar stood originally in the centre of the apse. To allow space for steps into the crypt, or possibly for a chorus cantorum, the nave walls were unpierced by arches for some distance west of the triumphal arch. In fact, what now forms the easternmost bays of the north and south aisles were originally separate chambers, from which, by winding steps, there were descents into the crypt. The crypt was also visible from the nave by an aperture in the middle of the chancel steps. This arrangement is still to be seen in the Church of St. Zeno-Maggiore, at Verona, a Church which bears many striking resemblances to this of Wing. The crypt, which is now only approached from the outside, is of rude construction, built of a hard brown stone and Roman bricks, and is notable for its completeness. There are two ranges of pillars round the confessio, forming an ambulatory, and terminating in two very early doorways through which it was approached by the above-mentioned steps from either side of the chancel arch. All traces of the steps have disappeared. The nave walls are pierced by three arches. These are semicircular and of one order only. Their only ornament is an impost of three square set-offs which does not extend to the lateral faces. The piers are oblong masses 6 ft. by 3. The level of the Saxon wall-plate is visible half-way up the clerestory windows. The roof of the Church was raised in the fifteenth century, and the beautiful timber ceiling with its carved figures, and also the stately western tower, belonged to the same date.

"The general effect of the Church is strikingly basilican. The oaken screens of the chancel and of the chapel of St. Catherine are noticeable, and the stone staircases of both rood lofts are complete. There is an Early English piscina and a stoup, and in the south porch some stone benches and the base of an Early Norman font of the same pattern as that at Aylesbury. In the chancel are the magnificent tombs of Sir William Dormer, and Dame Dorothy his wife, recumbent, and of his son, Sir Robert Dormer, created Baron Dormer, of Wing, 1615, and his lady. At the foot of both tombs kneel their children, and the upper parts are rich with the numerous quarterings of this great Buckinghamshire family. The Dormers of Wing Park became Earls of Carnarvon, and subsequently merged in the Chesterfield family, many of whom are buried in the Church. The manor and benefice of Wing were assigned by the Empress Maud, daughter of Henry I., to the Monastery of St. Nicholas of Angers, which had a cell at Ascott. On the abolition of alien Priors, temp. Henry V., they were transferred to the Convent of St. Mary du Pré at St. Albans, and at the dissolution of religious houses they passed first to Cardinal Wolsey, then to the Penn family, and shortly after to the Dormers. The old inventories and churchwardens' accounts show a great wealth of church furniture and plate. They date from 1527, and the registers from 1546; both are full of interest."

At the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Leopold de Rothschild, the

members drove to Ascott Park, and were entertained at luncheon in the Cricket Pavilion.

The Rev. R. B. Dickson, Vicar of Stewkley, on behalf of the guests, proposed a cordial vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Leopold de Rothschild—who were absent from home—for their hospitality, which was heartily accorded to them.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Was held in the Pavilion, the Rev. W. M. Myres being voted to the chair. The minutes of the previous annual meeting, which was held at Leckhampstead, were read and confirmed.

The next business was the election of officers. On the motion of Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Gunn, the secretaries were re-elected. The treasurer, Mr. J. Williams, who was unable to attend, was re-appointed. The two auditors were also re-appointed.

The names of several new members were submitted and approved, as follows:—Rev. S. Herbert, Iver; Rev. C. G. Hutchins, Dinton; Rev. J. Hill, Oving; Rev. C. Joyce, Fulmer; Rev. F. H. Tatham, Wing; Mr. J. E. Viney, Aylesbury; Miss Cooper, Natley, Hillesden; and Miss C. Harrison, Buckingham.

On the motion of the Rev. R. H. Pigott, Mr. Leopold Rothschild was elected a vice-president of the Society.

Mr. Parker, in the absence of the treasurer, presented the annual report and financial statement, showing an estimated deficit of £26.

The report was adopted on the motion of Mr. Cocks, seconded by Mr. Harris.

Some financial questions were referred to the General Committee, and a hope was expressed that members would promptly pay their subscriptions.

Mr. J. L. Myres, reporting on the Society's work during the past year, mentioned that the notice of the governing body of Eton College had been called, by a memorial signed by the secretaries, to the uncared-for state of Bledlow Cross; and that it was hoped that this ancient monument to a forgotten battle would now be effectually preserved. Also that in the Parish Church of Iver the mutilation of the remains of the Saxon building had been prevented by a timely remonstrance. With regard to the excursions, Mr. Myres explained how the proposed visit to Eton and Windsor had been postponed on account of the presence of the Court at Windsor, and the inconvenience of the railway service. The Society had been invited by the Oxford Architectural Society to join an excursion to Winchester, and several members, who had been able to accept the invitation, had spent a very pleasant and profitable day there.

The Rev. R. B. Dickson enquired what was the story of the Cross at Bledlow. He believed that Bledlow meant blood-hill. He also asked whether, in the case of the Church at Iver, to which Mr. Myres referred, a faculty had been obtained for mutilation of the building, and if the Society had drawn the attention of the Bishop to the subject.

Mr. Myres replied that Bledlow Cross was traditionally connected with the battle of the Danes, but he could not give any further information on the matter. With regard to Iver no faculty was asked for, and the Society had stopped the contemplated alterations.

Mr. Parker reported that the RECORDS would be shortly issued. He certainly thought, that, taking into consideration the chief objects of the Society, it was never more useful or active than at the present time. He hoped they would do him the favour of reading his preface in the

RECORDS, from which they would see the actual condition of their Society, and in which he had endeavoured to show its practical working. There would be also several excellent papers worthy of their attention. He believed they would find that, on the whole, the number would be exceedingly interesting on this occasion, and he pointed out that rather than losing ground, the Society has been gaining in usefulness. Mr. Parker concluded his remarks by expressing a hope that the members present would solicit others to join the Society, so that they would have no deficits but a successful career in the future.

The proceedings then ended

STEWKLEY CHURCH.

The members on reaching this Church, were conducted over it by the Vicar, the Rev. R. Bruce Dickson, who read a paper on this very interesting building, kindly prepared by him, and founded on the paper read before the Society by the Rev. C. H. Travers, a former Vicar of Stewkley, and published in the RECORDS, Vol. III., pp. 77 et seq.

Subsequently, Mr. Dickson hospitably entertained the visitors to tea at the Vicarage.

The day's proceedings would have also included a drive to Liscombe Park, but owing to extensive repairs which were being carried out at the House the visit was abandoned.

The party divided into two sections at Stewkley for the homeward journey, one of the carriages leaving for Aylesbury and the other for Leighton Buzzard, to enable members from a distance to catch their trains.

Those members who returned *via* Leighton Buzzard were able to spend a few minutes at Soulbury Church.