

CONCERNING CERTAIN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CHURCHES, Etc.

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THE churches of Buckinghamshire,* in comparison with those of other counties, are, as regards architectural and ecclesiological interest,† rather below than above the ordinary average. In the northern part they are certainly better than in the south, where they are often somewhat mean and poor. Neglect and decay have long ago done their work in both portions—*ornamenta* and *instrumenta ecclesiastica* of some antiquity having been lost without the smallest hope of recovery. Moreover, funeral hatchments, full of interest as family mementoes, have been utterly destroyed. Reports of archidiaconal and episcopal visitations, from 1664 to 1805, indirectly describing the churches, are anything but pleasant reading. But such distinctly record facts.

Of course there are several churches which possess

* Many of the notes, memoranda, and sketches from which this paper has been written, were made during four Long Vacation walking tours in 1850–1854, when I was at Oxford. In some cases I have visited the churches again. I was, of course, always more interested in, and attracted towards, those which were not restored. Edward VI.'s Commissioners and Oliver Cromwell's soldiers, as is too well known, did much in the way of destruction; but modern architects, with modern clergy seldom practically disapproving, did more. Many sanctuaries are now mere shells—empty, unfurnished, desolate, and whitewashed. Any discrepancies from their present state may be therefore thus explained. Improvement in certain respects, with the wildest destruction in others, have apparently gone hand in hand.

† Those interested in the archæology of Bucks may consult with profit Harleian MSS., No. 3361, Steele's Collections, which contain many facts and records of interest.

features of notable importance, and of singular constructional and historical value; but such are easily reckoned up, and, at best, are not over-numerous. To some I have given special consideration in previous volumes of this serial. The churches of Aylesbury, High or Chepping Wycombe, Chesham, Beaconsfield, Amersham, Stewkley, Milton Keynes, Olney, North Crawley, Chilton, and Crendon, are, one and all, of a fair size, interesting ground plan, and generally worthy of careful study; for they serve to elucidate archæological and ecclesiastical history, and so enable the student of the Past to acquire accurate historical knowledge.

Planned originally at different periods, with varying necessities in their construction, some of them own irregular features—the point and purport of which are not now altogether apparent. Neither site, aspect, nor prospect was ever overlooked by the original designers when such began to design: while, as a rule, everything was properly made to give way to the needs of Divine service—a service, firstly, for the greater honour and glory of God; and, secondly, for the worship and edification of man. When, with this due and sufficient key to such structures before the mind's eye, they are reverently and intelligently contemplated, there are lessons enough to be learnt for the patriot as well as for the archæologist, and facts of singular interest to be noticed for all such historians as prefer facts to fiction.

Owing to the numerous additions, changes, restorations, and acts of destruction which have taken place, it is sometimes difficult to trace accurately their history. For in later years, so carefully and scrupulously has old work been copied, that it is often quite impossible to determine where the old ended and the new began. Moreover, some of the new work is so much like the old work in spirit of design and execution, that it may be unintentionally referred to a date which is absolutely wrong. Several curious and notable examples of this point have come before my notice. Hence, every fact as regards church alteration, destruction, or improvement, with reference to every such fabric, should be carefully put on record. Had the definite recommendation of the late Rev. Arthur Baker to our local Archæological Society been put into practice when recommended, forty

years ago, a body of parochial facts and details would have existed in its archives of the greatest local importance and value. This, as I know, was attempted in a very few cases, but too generally neglected.

Now, however, as some of us look back for half a century, it is found that so much has been improperly destroyed, and so much more absolutely passed by and forgotten, that the day for efficiently doing the work is possibly past and gone for ever.

Let no one, however, consider any historical local fact of no due or sufficient interest. On the other hand, let every rector,* vicar, curate, and churchwarden faithfully preserve such, with any written testimony bearing on the same—a hope of the preservation of which many members of our Society have often indulged. For we, of the present day, benefit by such labours in the past, and therefore those who may come after us will be, no doubt, glad to benefit by ours. Archæology, heraldry, ecclesiology, and history are consequently never to be despised. Love of church, family, and race is the sure foundation of patriotism. Without patriotism a faithful and true national history is quite impossible of attainment. Hence the congeries of artful falsehoods and literary dissertations by ill-informed dabblers in book-making, which pass for history.

The work of destruction, however, as almost every-

* The following references to articles, papers, and letters concerning Buckinghamshire churches, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, may be of interest to local archæologists, and to others willing to preserve that which remains :—

Leckhampstead	. . .	Vol. LXXXVI., ii., p. 497.
Maids' Morton . . .	. . .	LXXIV., p. 813.
Padbury . . . . .	. . .	LXVI., p. 841.
Thornton . . . . .	. . .	LXXI., p. 1081.
Beaconsfield . . . .	. . .	LXXX., ii., p. 105.
Eton . . . . .	. . .	LXVIII., p. 109.
Upton . . . . .	. . .	XXVI. (A.D. 1846), p. 604.
Ivinghoe . . . . .	. . .	LXXX., p. 209.
Whitchurch . . . . .	. . .	LXVI., p. 841.
Bletchley . . . . .	. . .	LXIV., p. 305.
Hanslope . . . . .	. . .	LXIX. and LXXV.
Chearsley . . . . .	. . .	LXXXIX., p. 497.
Aston Clinton . . . .	. . .	LXVI., p. 841.
Quarrendon . . . . .	. . .	LXXXVI., p. 489.

one now admits, was begun on quite a national scale * under the Tudors. In Buckinghamshire Sir Edmund Peckham and the other Commissioners executed their commissions well. Such might not have been done at all had the down-trodden people appreciated what was being exactly attempted. But those who had secured the upper hand had evidently studied in the deadly moral and political school of the Italian Machiavelli. Therefore, in order to secure the object they had in view—their plunder and destruction, under the plea of “reform,” and nothing else—persons of family and influence, and batches of needy gentlepeople, were first indirectly bribed by cheap grants of abbey and church lands, and long leases, as well as by direct donations,† or promises of offices, from the Crown. The yeomen of the villages, and the tradesmen of the towns, seeing and knowing all this, very soon imitated their betters. Cottages were consequently pulled down, the poor and destitute scattered; farms were joined together, fewer labourers employed; abbeys were razed to the ground; chapelries and chantries suppressed; while the fabrics of the churches were used as seldom as possible. For the ancient religion was scoffed at, the old clergy had died out, while many of the new were held in great contempt.

Under Oliver Cromwell, about a century afterwards, the work of church destruction was rudely continued, and for awhile consolidated. Buckinghamshire was specially blessed by his presence, and that of his tools and agents. The Puritans, however, notwithstanding all their local advantages, would have found their destructive policy far more difficult of accomplishment, had it not been for the dismal and dark precedents of the sixteenth century.

Under that period, the state of the Buckinghamshire churches, and of this part of the diocese of Lincoln (as

* Special officers and new offices were created, in order to effect the reforms; while opponents were either bribed, expatriated, silenced, imprisoned, or hanged.

† Thomas Cromwell thus wrote to the King:—“At Cavesham is a proper lodging, where the Canon [of Notley] lay, with a fair garden and an orchard; meet to be bestowed upon some friend of your lordship’s in these parts.”—*Ellis’s Collection of Original Letters*, Vol. II., pp. 79, 81.

it was until a recent period), can be learnt with tolerable accuracy by a study of Wills, Registers, Parochial Account Books, and private records and deeds relating to old families.

Some years ago, I was enabled to discover much regarding the true situation. The late Lord Hannen (when Sir James Hannen) gave me permission to examine a long series of instruments at Somerset House; and consequently I carefully read through nearly five hundred unsorted testamentary documents, wills, and lists of property, exclusively relating to this county of Bucks. Many other private sources unexpectedly became open to me. Documents in the British Museum, Lambeth Palace Library, with copies and abstracts from the Library of the Vatican, were studied and made use of. The outcome of such an extended examination is embodied in the following account, relating to the years 1571—1585, which was written with every care, consideration, and foresight, some time ago.* As it fairly and faithfully sets out facts, it may be here reasonably quoted:—

“The state of the fabrics of the churches and the nature of the services in them had rapidly gone from bad to worse. Many more of the former were then becoming ruinous. In some dioceses, notoriously those of Oxford and Norwich, numerous churches and chapels were deliberately allowed to become utterly desolate. Men could not be secured to serve them, for the new owners of the great tithes were often only eminent for their superfine rapacity. In certain of the churches, no service of any sort or kind had been held for nearly twelve years. There was often no one either to look after the fabric, to keep up the straggling hedges or impaired fences of the churchyards (in which swine often grubbed up the graves); no one to let fresh air into the building, or to preserve the remaining fittings from the alternate evils of mustiness and damp on the one hand, or of dry-rot and pilferers on the other. Doors at last lost their rusted hinges and imperfect fastenings; dust accumulated; storied windows were broken; starlings

* *The Church under Queen Elizabeth. An Historical Sketch.* Second Edition, revised pp. 233, 234. London: 1894.

found a shelter under the roofs; spiders undisturbed spun their webs in convenient angles; bell-towers were turned into dovecotes and places for breeding pigeons, by some local yeoman. The bells, no longer needed, were sold—for they brought in something; the lead was stripped off the aisle roofs; sometimes the chancel was altogether destroyed, so as to avoid the cost and difficulty of repairing it; while in certain cases these combined evils eventually led to the absolute destruction* of whole fabrics, so that even now in many parishes, it is impossible for any but the duly initiated to trace even the foundation-stones on some secluded slope of what, until Queen Elizabeth's day, had been a fair and stately House of God. Many such, at the hands of 'the godly,' were wholly 'reformed' off the face of the earth."

Here it may be noted that the number of old churches in Buckinghamshire, dedicated to God in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary,† is unusually large and notable, there being no less than seventy-one out of two hundred and fifty-two. Thus many of the village feasts are observed on her festivals.‡

* "In the diocese of Oxford (though portions were then in that of Lincoln) may be mentioned the churches of North Weston, Easington, Quarrendon, Creslow, Mursley, Littlecote near Stewkley, Medmenham, Saunderton, Deyncourt near Wooburn, and Rousham-in-Wingrave, as ruined or razed. The late Rev. W. Hastings Kirke, in a paper on *The Desecrated Churches in Bucks* (RECORDS OF BUCKS, Vol. III, p. 127), asserts 'that the whole number in Buckinghamshire alone may be estimated at no less than sixty Supposing that each of such churches would have accommodated a hundred worshippers (a low calculation), this destruction then robbed the people of six thousand sittings.' (Ibid. p. 234.)

† It is a well-known fact, recorded by Adam, in his *Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln*—whose influence in Bucks was so considerable and widespread—that reverence for the Blessed Virgin was the feature of his life. Hence the number of dedications in the Lincoln diocese. To her honour "St. Hugh," as is written, "greatly increased the luminary of the Church of Lincoln, and assigned to its treasury such ample revenues, that the vast space of the Cathedral was almost as brilliantly lighted during the night offices, by the multitude of tapers, as it was during day by the rays of the sun."—*Magna Vita*, p. 366. See also *Concilia*, by Wilkins, tom. ii., p. 552.

‡ The laws of King Ethelred (A.D. 1008) as may be seen in Wilkins' *Concilia* ii. 145 and 552, enjoined the observance of Our Lady's Feasts, first with fasting then with feasting; while

In addition to these, which include the chief churches of the county, viz.:—Haddenham, Addington, Beachampton, Leckhampstead, Stowe, Marsh Gibbon, Amer-sham, Aylesbury, Chesham, Princes Risborough, Denham, Hitcham, Langley Marsh, Drayton Beauchamp, Hardwich, Wendover, Ivinghoe, Mentmore, Stewkley, Whaddon, Bletchley, Clifton Reynes, Lavenham, Shenley, Wavendon, Long Crendon, Chilton, North Marston, and Quainton—two are dedicated in honour of our Blessed Lady's Assumption—at Hartwell, the seat of the Hampdens and the Lees, and at Twyford, the old seat of the renowned Giffards.

I proceed to notice a few churches, in detail, but with brevity :—

The Church of "OUR LADYE OF LANGLEY MARISH," as it was described in 1503, is in parts very interesting. Some of its decorated, or second pointed features, are striking and beautiful—specially the four *sedilia** on the south side of the sanctuary. The adjoining chapel and room for a library are noteworthy, each evidencing the care of some of our forefathers-in-the-faith to benefit both people and parish. The coats of arms of the Kiddermister race, with those of their alliances, set forth in the library, should be copied and preserved with care, as they appear to have been well and accurately set forth, but are fading.

In the churchyard there are several monumental inscriptions of note—many containing prayers for the dead, and many more the three letters "R. I. P." But, as a recent visit served to show, Time is effacing all, more or less ; so that ancient traditions on this point may possibly be all too soon lost.

the Synod of Exeter held, A.D. 1287, extended the obligation to the Feast of the Conception, Dec. 8th. The Province of Canterbury ratified all this, in A.D. 1328. Ethelred's law had long been enjoined throughout the Lincoln Diocese, and so in Bucks. The old terms "Mary-merket," "Mary-stance," and "Our Lady's Fair," are still in use. "Mary-fairings"—cakes representing the Mother and Holy Child in gilt gingerbread—were, I am told, common at country fairs, wakes, and village festivals, fifty years ago.

* These four structural seats seem to imply that at least four persons—priest, deacon, and sub-deacon, together with a possible clerical master of the ceremonies or assistant priest—officiated in the sanctuary at great feasts.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WEXHAM, in the Deanery of Mursley, though of no particular size, and belonging to a somewhat obscure place, is another remarkable edifice. The building is small: the windows being in different styles. There are two northern windows in the nave; others, with the south door, are third pointed, the east window being of a good second pointed character. Forty-five years ago, an altar-slab stood edgeways against the eastern wall, while the platform or *predella* of the sanctuary was then almost perfect, with all its original and very artistic encaustic tiles. The "Joys of Mary" * were represented within cusped circles in fresco-painting, the figures being of a brownish-red colour edged with black, on the eastern wall of the chancel—the Resurrection over the east window, while both on roof and upon encaustic tile, the letter M; the same letter, with a verge or rod placed upright over it; the Lily crowned; the Mary-gold—quite distinct from the archaic Rose of Tudor times—were very appropriately and effectively represented.†

The Church of OUR LADY OF EDLESBOROUGH, in the same Rural Deanery, though of a late period—for the work is mainly third pointed—is also full of interest.

* It may not be altogether out of place to add here, in a note, that the Five Joys of Mary are, with a single exception, subjects taken from Holy Scripture: 1. The Annunciation; 2. The Nativity; 3. The Resurrection; 4. The Ascension; 5. The Assumption; subjects so constantly represented in their fivefold relation in Christian art.

A Sarum service book, belonging to an old Buckinghamshire family, once resident at Chearsley, which I examined page by page some years ago, contains the following in MS.:—

“Ladye, ladye, for thy Joyes Five,
Gette me grace, in this live,
To knowe & kepe over all thing
Christen feith & Goddes bydding.”

† The late Mr. Alexander Nisbet, F.S.A., drew the attention of our Society to its altar *predella*, and to the beauty of its tiles, in a letter which was read at an annual meeting in Aylesbury, circa 1855. Local tradition—recounted to me secondhand—avers that the old altar-stone was buried within the east end of the church about the year 1858.

It stands in a high and most commanding position. Its ground plan is simple and excellent for a village church.*

It consists of nave, with north and south aisles, a square good-proportioned tower at the west end of the nave, a north porch and a good-sized chancel divided from the nave by an oaken screen. In the chancel remains an effective *piscina* and a corresponding single *sedile*. It contains seats for a choir, or lay-clerks, with several boldly-carved oaken *misereres*. The nave has four arches on either side, and, raised on two steps, there is a somewhat plain and severe octagonal font of freestone with panelled sides. There are traces of a reredos to an old altar in the north aisle (anciently known as Rufford's), which is believed to have been dedicated in honour of St. Michael.

"Our Lady of Edlesborough," mentioned in a will proved at Lincoln in 1465, has reference apparently to an image or picture of renown which remained for the veneration of the faithful until Edward VI.'s reign.

There is also a curious incised slab in the north aisle; a painted consecration-cross within a circle on the north wall close to a window-splay, and several specimens of encaustic tiles at the easternmost end. Up to a comparatively recent period—*i.e.*, about 1858, there remained an ancient vestment box made from the trunk of a tree, scooped out inside, but rough in the exterior and bound with bands of iron terminating in rudely-formed lilies.

ST. MARY'S, LAVENDON, in the Rural Deanery of Newport, so well-placed in the landscape, consists of choir, nave, north and south aisle, with north and south porches, and a round tower at the west end of the nave.

* Village churches, erected in open and spacious churchyards, need quite a different treatment architecturally from those of a town or city, more especially when the latter are placed quite adjacent to houses. In a town, light should be obtained by large and well-placed clerestory windows, by which both nave and aisles can be lighted from the sky above, and not by low-placed windows in aisles close to the elbows of the worshippers, where they are not wanted and only create a draught and let in external noise. Abroad, in Italy, Lombardy and Belgium, this point has been often embodied in design. Many of the cathedrals and churches of the Flemish cities and towns, though surrounded by adjacent houses and shops, have solid walls, unpierced for fifteen feet or more, and obtain their efficient light from above.

This latter has been regarded by some as Saxon in character, and possibly it is. Parts of the lower masonry seem to indicate as much. But it is not always easy to determine exactly where Saxon work ends and Norman begins.*

In the chancel, the East window and another towards its eastern part on the north side are of early and good third pointed work. Under the latter are *sedilia* of an older date, a square-headed aumbrey remains in the north wall. There is also a cinquefoiled *piscina* and a priest's door. A square-headed Perpendicular, or second pointed window adjoins this—two earlier windows having been blocked up to make room for it. Two narrow lancet windows of the same type on the north side are very widely splayed. The chancel arch is singularly plain, though graceful enough in form and proportion.

On either side of the nave are three arches—on the north these are of an early first pointed type, more Norman, perhaps, than Early English; on the south they are abruptly acute and exceedingly simple. An old red vestment of Genoese velvet was for many years used as a pulpit hanging.

In the south aisle may be seen a recessed trefoiled niche, and a small *piscina* to match. Here was an altar, probably raised in honour of St. Michael. The south doorway is of good first pointed work, with a poor Perpendicular or third pointed porch enclosing it, having a Sacristan's or Watcher's† room or treasury above.

The north aisle in its north side has a beautiful first pointed doorway of excellent design and proportions, with a porch of a much later date.

* *E.g.* When the old Norman Church of Tettesworth, a dependent chapelry of the Prebendal Church of Thame, Oxon, was pulled down about 1842, the question which had often been raised, as to whether it was not originally of Saxon formation, was settled by a careful examination of the foundations and masonry of the eastern corners of the chancel; when its Saxon origin was finally made apparent. I took a rough sketch of those parts, now in the Bodleian Library.

† "The last deep echo of the organ's notes had died in silence. Save the Watcher, none paced the still aisles, or bent before the Rood."—*The Bells of Botteville Tower*, p. 27. London: 1874.

The bold and well-designed font is octagonal in shape, with panelled tracery and conventional flowers on the sides of its capacious bowl.

The east end of the church, some years ago, was in a wretched and deplorable state, evidencing great neglect. There were then to be seen traces of painted figures of saints on the chancel wall; * while the splays of several of the first pointed windows showed some very early and effective colouring. Square bricks outlined in dark brown were represented, each one ornamented with a vermilion flower or a green scroll leaf. There were also a few fragments of early glass remaining both in the chancel and north aisle, and several specimens of good encaustic tiles scattered about the floor of the church: portions of which in the nave had been roughly and patchily mended with common and coarse red bricks.

Another sacred edifice—that of “OUR LADY OF NORTH MARSTON,” in the Deanery of Waddesdon — deserves special notice; for it is one of the finest and most compact village churches in that neighbourhood.

It comprises choir, nave, with good clerestory, north and south aisles, south porch, a tower at the west end, and a vestry with a treasure-room or Watcher’s residence over it to the north.

Evidently this church was originally built in the first pointed style, for the piers and arches in its northern part clearly indicate as much. In the south aisle the piers and arches are evidently second pointed, as is also the tower; though this latter appears to have been frequently repaired and added to at later periods.

The chancel is a good, well-preserved specimen of third pointed work, of fine proportions, and of unusual dignity. It has an excellent oaken roof—perhaps of somewhat too low a pitch — supported on freestone corbels. There are very effective *sedilia* in the south

* It was said by an Oxford architect who visited the place—Mr. Joseph Plowman—that, in damp weather, figures of Our Lady, St. Anne, and St. Nicholas, were sometimes plainly discernible in outline through the whitewash. On the splay of one of the northern windows of the chancel was represented Aaron’s Rod budding and blossoming, with the arms of Bishop Roger Peyvre of Salisbury above, viz., argent on a chevron gules, three fleur de lys or.

wall, with a corresponding *piscina*, and two richly-designed but now mutilated niches or tabernacles, on the chancel's eastern end. The windows are of third pointed work, but evidently of an early date. There are also some very handsome oaken stalls on either side, with excellent panelling and effective bench-ends, or poppy-heads. The door, on the north side leading to the vestry, is a very unique example of good wood-work. The vestry itself is really a fine and spacious chamber, with a good water drain on its south side. A window at the east (before which the priest vested) is well placed, and a fireplace in the north wall completes the arrangement. The Watcher's room above, to which a staircase leads, is very similar and very convenient. It likewise has a fireplace. Both rooms are roofed with panelled oak ceilings.

The east end of the south aisle is also full of interesting features. The old *predella* may still be traced. On either side of the chapel are good second pointed three-light windows, and two floriated niches at its east end. There is also a squint relating to the high altar, profusely ornamented with archaic flowers in freestone. This aisle's south doorway, though plain, is admirably moulded, and of excellent form and proportions.

The north aisle gives evidence of considerable antiquity; while the chapel at its east end—with *piscina* and aumbrey—is very interesting.

The clerestory windows are very appropriate to their position, and afford good light. The nave roof of oak, in excellent repair, is supported on stone corbels.

The font is of stone, decorated; its bowl being upheld by sculptured angels springing from its shaft.

There are a few unimportant remains of stained glass, mainly fragments. There are also many specimens of encaustic tiles; while the interior has evidently been richly decorated with figure subjects* and archaic colouring in almost every part; though it is cold and chilly enough in appearance now. Some ancient brass sconces with prickets, a green communion cloth, a brazen chandelier for tapers, and an hour-glass frame of

* One of these represents a crowned female saint.

wrought iron, appear to have been lost or removed since the year 1852.

The author is well enough aware that in eight cases out of ten, as regards Bucks churches, and specially in small edifices, there was no substantial specially-designed sacristy or vestry at all. In only a few cases was there a parvis over a porch, or a treasure-room over a vestry. These, though existing still in a small number of churches, are often found to be too damp and unprotected to be of much practical use. That on the north side of the choir of St. Mary's, Aylesbury, is the best arranged, least altered, and still the most perfect. It has a fireplace, conveniently placed, a vestment press, and a cope-hanger;* and appears to have been, of old, very safe and secure, as both well-protected door and window indicate. The modern plan of sometimes partitioning off the east end of an aisle, or appropriating an altarless and desolate chapel, has come in during the last two or three centuries. In all probability the vestments, altar-hangings, and other *ornamenta*, were kept in chests,† which stood in the chancel where the clergyman vested. Sometimes they were preserved in the church-house.‡

* This was sometimes termed a "cope-horse," like a "towel-horse," a term still in use.

† Præ-Reformation vestment, or treasure trunks, remained in the following churches, amongst many others, up to the year 1850, some of them of great antiquity. I have notes of those then remaining at Haddenham, Chilton, Chearsley, Wendover, Nether Winchendon, Crendon, Brill, Towersey, Monk's Risborough, Saunderton, Bledlow, Princes Risborough, Beaconsfield, Marsh Gibbon, Worminghall, Ickford, Stantonbury, Aylesbury, Whitchurch, Creslow Chapel, Berton, Buckland, Stoke Mandeville, and Wing. I am astonished to find how few of these now remain. On this point my experience tallies with that of Mr. J. L. André, recorded in the "Surrey Archæological Collections," who thus writes:—"Church chests have, I regret to say, rapidly diminished in number during the last thirty years. Formerly there was an interesting one at Charlwood, with a half-octagonal lid, fastened by the usual three locks; this has been removed since 1862."—Vol. XI., p. 12, in a paper on "Charlwood Church."

‡ I have found several cases of special vestments and hangings given through testamentary bequest by munificent donors, for particular feasts and purposes, being left in the custody of surviving members of the family of the donor who gave them. Such appear to have been duly and dutifully preserved, and brought out on solemn and specified festivals or personal anniversaries.

The clerk, or attendant, having assisted the cleric, vested himself in rochet or surplice.* The first-named, the rochet, was more convenient than the second, because it had close and not flowing sleeves; and it is mentioned in Churchwardens' Accounts of several churches. When ministering at the altar, "serving the priest," the sacristan† or sexton sometimes read the Epistle and Gospel, spread the linen houselling-cloth, and followed the celebrant in giving a draught of wine and water to each communicant after the personal reception of the Host. He also recited the old form of confession prior to communion, on behalf of the communicants, and distributed both the Blessed Bread and the doles of ordinary bread to the poor, if there were any of the latter to bestow. In case of funerals, special and specific gifts of the person departed were either given away at the time of actual sepulture or after High Mass on the following Sunday, when more people would be able to attend than on work-days. Allusions to all these detailed rites are found in wills and testamentary dispositions; and, though some of such are not now quite apparent as to their purport and object, yet, one and all, they help in enabling people of the present day to understand the method, charity, and ecclesiastical customs of their forefathers. Testators of old seldom failed to remember both church and poor. Sacred buildings and bridges were often kept in repair by the acceptable bequests of the just and the generous. Moreover, the wills of Elizabeth's reign differ very materially in their terms regarding death, burial, and consequent duty, from those of preceding reigns—prayers for the departed having been so generally dropped, under Elizabeth's

* "The Sacrist shall lay up the vestments, light the candles keep the altars, take care that the church be swept and kept clean, etc. . . . With the advice of the Treasurer he shall also take care that there be no want of wine, water, or wax candles, for the celebration of Divine Service, at times proper for their celebrations."—*Statutes of Gloucester Cathedral*, Chapter xxiii.

† I am indebted to F. F. Giraud, Esq., Town Clerk of Faversham, for the gift of a most interesting pamphlet from his pen, "On the Parish Clerks and Sextons of Faversham, A.D. 1506," which evidently embraces canons and customs current throughout the whole National Church at the period in question.

advisers; publicly in divine service in the first place, and privately afterwards. As a consequence, funerals became very much altered, as did burial customs, mortuary rites, monuments, and memorial inscriptions. Instead of the Communion Service*—used under Elizabeth, with a sermon, the former soon dropped out of use—prayers and a “funeral sermon” alone remaining. And this latter was delivered only at the burial of people of rank or quality.

One other church, that of ST. MARY’S, WENDOVER, in that rural deanery, needs to be briefly noticed. Anciently this town was a place of special repute, and of far more importance than it is now.

The plan of the church is ordinary, and the edifice consists of chancel, nave, north and south aisles, and tower. In the nave there are five arches on each side, with clustered pillars on moulded bases upon one side, and round pillars on the other.

The chancel arch and that in the east side of the tower are alike in character, height and mouldings. The aisle windows are of two lights, with a quatrefoil in the head; but these, as also the clerestory windows, have been greatly mutilated. In the south aisle there is a good trefoil *piscina* in the south wall, and the remains of a stone holy-water stoup at the south entrance.

The chancel is of second pointed work, but was restored too soon (about A.D. 1835 or 1836), so that much of its old character is irretrievably gone.

Many objects of interest, which tradition declares to have existed in the early part of the century in this church, are not now to be found. Banners, funeral armour, and many hatchments have been removed.†

* A special form for this at burials was printed in Latin—“*Celebratio Cœnæ Domini in funeribus*”—A.D. 1560, and appears to have been frequently adopted in the diocese of Lincoln, as elsewhere.—See Bishop Anthony Sparrow’s *Collection of Articles, Injunctions, etc.*, p. 199. London: Butler & Clarke, 1671, where it is reprinted.

† I am informed that floral wreaths and marriage garlands were hung up on the walls of the church on certain occasions. And sometimes such were suffered to remain for a year or more. The same custom existed until about 1855, in St. Alban’s Abbey, as I myself saw such existing in that year.

There is said to have been a fine altar platform of encaustic tiles at the east end of the north aisle, remaining until about the year 1834 or 1836. This, too, is gone, though some of the tiles remain. Certain fragments of "an alabaster table," *i.e.*, a table of imagery, were found about the year 1841, in digging a grave, and are said to be still preserved in the town.

What has been lost, owing to neglect, decay, and destruction, can scarcely be now realised. Things moral have been scattered with things material; though many ancient traditions—it may be somewhat perverted—have died hard.

The so-called "Restoration" which was effected about sixty years ago, well-intentioned enough, was simply disastrous.

The Christian folk-lore of Buckinghamshire, moreover—relating to holy wells, cross-roads, omens, traditional prophecies, lucky and unlucky days, sacred rites, and church ceremonies—has, to a large extent, apparently died out. Much was occasionally mixed up with strange and unedifying customs; but there was almost invariably found a striking undercurrent of true religious sentiment, which, though perhaps occasionally perverted, touched and tinged every independent example of such lore.

Most notable, likewise, has been the effect of internal church decoration, on the protection and preservation of the old religious idea.* Anciently, the sacred walls, with their quaint and archaic decoration—so mystical and yet so telling—shared with former preachers and teachers, the engrossed interest of the rustic or town congregations,† for the eye was at least of equal value

* I have noted, during the last half-century, that patches or fragments of pictures have been, from time to time, discovered at Wing, Stoke Poges, Crendon, Worminghall, Dinton, Iver, Hardwicke, Haddenham, Little Hampden, Cuddington, Bierton, Amer sham, Westbury, Maids' Morton, etc. These seem to have been either covered anew, or not sketched by anyone, or now totally destroyed.

† There was a church painter, or painter of religious pictures, living at Buckingham in the latter part of the fifteenth century—*circa* 1490–1545—who not only provided pictures, but painted and gilded images of wood, stone, and alabaster, and also repaired them. He was employed more than once for work in the church

in this respect with the ear. Pictures of our Lord in judgment, of the saved and the lost, of the sufferers in the prison-house, and of the joys of the vision of God, of which patches of several have been discovered under many coats of whitewash—of the commemoration of the Lord Christ's miracles and mysteries, and specially the Rood, with Mary and John depicting His atonement—taught the people with precision and good effect; while some of the children's horn-books, with traditional oral teaching of the old parish clerks, or holders of the most useful, but now almost extinct, dame schools, handed down ancient prayers and carols* in rhyme—the "Woes of Jesus" and the "Joys of Mary,"† often depicted in artistically-arranged and striking colours on the walls of the parish churches.

The following was a readily-learnt prayer:—

Upon my right side I lay me,
As Jesus did on Mary's knee;
Now, Jesus, for Thy Holy Name,
Shield me for aye from sin and shame;
Wisdom and wit unto me give,
So long as I in this world live,
Save me, sweet Jesus, evermore.‡

"Wit," here, of course, means sound religious knowledge and due foresight.

of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Thame. In certain Churchwardens' Accounts in which he is mentioned, his name is not given, only his office. He appears to have been much sought after in the diocese generally.

* The carol beginning—

"The first good joy that Mary had,
It was a joy of one;
To see her own Son, Jesus Christ
To suck at her breast-bone," etc.,

is still sung at Christmastide in hundreds of churches; and this to a tune at once ancient, inspiriting, and devotional; no doubt the easily-learnt and unaltered melody of our Christian forefathers.

† At Dinton church, on the east end of the south aisle, the late Mr. Street, R.A., found the "Joys of Mary" represented in coloured cinquefoils round its eastern window: a feature once existing in several other of the Bucks churches.

‡ An old version of this versified prayer, in ancient spelling, is preserved on folio 228, b, of the Harleian MS., No. 541.

And that below, even now used in many villages, and by many in Bucks, may be cited :—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
 Bless the bed I lie upon :
 Four corners to my bed,
 Four angels round me spread,
 One to sing and one to pray,
 And two to carry my soul away :
 So, if I die before I wake,
 I pray to God my soul to take,
 For Jesus Christ, our Saviour's sake.*

More than a dozen different and sometimes very obscure and rugged forms of it are still current in the county. If I am not mistaken, a horn-book with one rude version was found in the old church of Addington (or Adstock ?), Bucks.

To pass on to another detail—the subject of out-door services at Rogation-tyde. I find from some notes taken about 1836, and given to me by the Rev. Charles Lee, then in charge of the parish, that, at Marsh Gibbon,† the Rogation Days were there observed with a religious ceremony‡ in the fields, and with interested attention on the part of many of those attending, which could not have been otherwise than practically beneficial :—

“Some call them—the three days preceding the feast of the Ascension—‘Ganging days.’ The rector, clerk, churchwardens, and sidesmen, with the chief farmers of the place, went together, one carrying a flag, and others poles with green boughs, up the village street, to the churchyard, and then round some fields, as heretofore. The opening part of the Litany was said, with three extracts from the Gospels, a hymn or ballad, and the Lord's Prayer. . . . Later (*i.e.*, subsequently to 1836) the Prayer and religious part of the rite were dropped, and few people assembled. . . . The

* The late Rev. Henry Quartley, M.A., a Bucks clergyman, one of the Bishop of Lincoln's officials, *circa* 1818, informed a friend of the author that this set of verses was commonly used, with “Our Father,” in his day.

† A similar observance took place at Sunningwell, Berks, until quite a recent period, as I have traditionally heard from those who had taken part in it.

‡ See *Anglo-Saxon Homilies*, by Thorpe, Vol. i., p. 247.

rector might have kept it up, but he was no antiquary, and indifferent."

A few more facts and notes, and I have done:—

A chapel belonging to the church at Caversham had been given to the Austin Canons of Notley Abbey by King John in 1162. A Warden, one of the Notley Canons, was thenceforward installed there, and said a daily mass in honour of our Lady. The place was one of great repute. The chapel enshrined an image of the Blessed Virgin of some renown. Isabel, Countess of Warwick, in her will declared: "To our Ladye of Caversham I bequeath a crown of gold, made of my chain and other broken gold in my cabinet, weighing twenty pounds."*

In the private accounts of Elizabeth of York, of Henry VII., and Henry VIII., fourteen records concerning it respectively appear, of visits and offerings to the shrine.†

This, with its image, went the way of almost all others soon afterwards.

John London, one of the Commissioners, wrote as follows, describing graphically how and when it went, to Thomas Cromwell:—

In my moste humble maner, I have me comenyd unto yower gude lordeschippe ascertenyng the same that I have pullyd down the image of Our Ladye at Caversham, whereunto wasse gret pilgrimage. The image is platyd over wyth sylver, and I have put yt in a cheste fast lockyd and nayled uppe, & by the next bardyge that comythe from Reding to London yt shall be brought to your lordeschippe. I have also pullyd down the place sche stode in, with all other ceremonyes as lightes, schrowdes, crowchys, and imagies of waxe hanging about the chapell, & have defacyd the same thorowly in exchuyng of any further resortt thedyr. Thys chapell dyde belong to Notley Abbey, and ther always wasse a chanon of that monastere which was called the Warden of Caversham, and he songe in the chapell, & hadde the offeringes for hys lyvinge.‡

Eustace Grenville, an ancestor of the recently-extinct Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, appears, by will, dated upon the Festival of St. Clement, 1479, to have

* *Testamenta Vetusta*, p. 240.

† *Letters and State Papers of Henry VIII.*, etc., Vol. ii., No. 1476, and Vol. iv., No. 2393.

‡ *Letters Concerning the Suppression of the Monasteries*; Camden Society, p. 221. London: 1843.

bequeathed to the light of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Parish Church of Wootton, three pounds of wax in candles and two torches. To the altar of the same he left one basket of wheat and one of barley.*

These bequests had reference to the chantry of Our Lady, for the high altar appears to have been dedicated to God in honour of All Saints. This chantry is now occupied by the large-sized mausoleum of the late Duke's race; but though full of corpses, their coffins, and lapidarian Latin, is altarless and singularly desolate.

From notes of another Grenville will, which I am now unable to identify, it likewise appears that a relic of St. Thomas à Becket was preserved either at Brill† or Wootton,‡ prior to the Tudor changes—a fact which the late Dr. Baron, of Queen's Coll., Oxford, son of a previous Vicar of Brill, also discovered in his valuable archæological researches. The relic seems to have been kept in an aumbrey, before which, on St. Thomas's feasts in December and July, trindles and other wax tapers were burnt in the saint's honour.

Though the author is well enough aware that the contents of this paper are desultory, and that some of the information set forth in it is not new, he still hopes that, taken as a whole, it may preserve a few facts of interest in regard to the churches and church customs of the county.

* *Testamenta Vetusta*, p. 351.

† All Saints' Church, Brill, is of considerable antiquity, being of Norman and first pointed styles.

‡ Wootton Church, likewise dedicated in honour of All Saints, has lost much of its architectural interest, being greatly, and in fact is irrevocably, mutilated, and strangely disfigured. The Grenville chapel, attached to the south aisle was built by William and Mary Grenville, A.D. 1343.