



Berrick Church, Oxfordshire.

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IF an apology is needed for introducing in this Journal the notice of a Church two miles from the borders of Berkshire, it must be found in the fact that Berrick Salome (or Sallom) derives the suffix of its name from a Berkshire parish. The neighbouring village of Britwell Salome was anciently owned by a family called Soleham, coming from the Parish of Sulham, and bearing the name of their ancestral home as a surname. It may therefore be presumed, though evidence of this is wanting, that the same family gave their name to Berrick Salome also.

Berrick Church stands outside the eastern end of the village, but the foundations of old buildings prove that the village formerly extended along the northern side of it. It is close to a primitive trackway leading from Sinodun Hill and Dorchester to Watlington and the Chilterns, just at the point where this trackway leaves the level plain of the Thames Valley and enters a remarkable hollow in the rising ground known as Hollandtide Bottom. Two chestnut trees of great size, stretching their arms to the length, in some cases, of fifty feet from the trunk, form a striking feature behind the Church on the north.

Few Churches could present an appearance less interesting and attractive than did this before its recent renovation. It was emphatically one of which people would say, and often did say, that there was nothing in it to be preserved, and it must be destroyed and re-built entirely. It therefore affords an excellent illustration of what can be effected by thoroughly conservative restorers.

A mean belfry tower at the west end, encased with plain boards and surmounted by a pyramidal roof of tiles, rising scarcely above

the roof of the nave, was the most prominent object that met the eye. But internally this is a very interesting timber belfry, apparently of the fourteenth century, consisting of four massive uprights, nearly a foot in thickness, braced together by intersecting cross beams at each of the four sides. Such a belfry may not unfrequently be found inside the western end of the Church, as at Didcot and Silchester; but this is remarkable as an external addition. The wooden tower at Yateley may be recalled as a similar example; but there the narrow lean-to, with tiled roof, on either side, gives it a different character. At Berrick the shabby boards have now been stripped off, and the lowest stage is arcaded with half-timber work and plaster; the middle stage is encased with tiles, divided by a broad band of shingles; and the upper part has an open arcade with weather-boards; while the whole is still surmounted by its old tiled roof with a rude cross of wood cased with lead upon the apex. The nave is entered on the south by a plain doorway of early Norman character, simply chamfered, its arch springing from small projecting abaci. A consecration cross is roughly scratched upon the eastern jamb. The font, of the same early character as the doorway, is of sufficient interest to demand a detailed description. It is surrounded with two bands of large interlacing circlets, all of which are studded throughout with small bosses, and each circlet is attached by a short loop to the next, as well as to the adjacent circle of the other band; and the font being of the usual tapering form, the two circlets of the lower series on the west side are dwarfed in order to accommodate them to the reduced size. Between these two bands of circlets is a narrow line of ornamentation much defaced, but apparently consisting of a series of grotesque saurians, each holding in his mouth the tail of the next. The font stands upon a square base, like the base of a pier, with a characteristic Norman ornament upon each angle projecting from a roll moulding which encircles the foot of the bowl. The sills of two small windows are to be seen in the upper part of the west wall, one on either side of the belfry, which partially conceals them.

Of this early Norman Church nothing further remained, except the lower parts of the nave walls. The masonry above is of early English date, and there is a pointed doorway of that period on the north side. The inner arch of the south doorway was also rebuilt at the same period. In the jambs of these doorways were found the head and sill of a small Norman window, which has been utilised to give additional light on the south side, close to the Nor-

man doorway. Another relic of that period, found on removing the plaster from the west wall, was a pierced stone, which appeared to have been the head of a pillar-piscina, but entirely defaced and mutilated.

The Early English north doorway had been blocked up ; but this has now been opened, and gives access to a spacious vestry, which is the only new addition to the fabric. Further east on this north side of the nave is a plain Jacobean window of three lights. Below the western part of its sill appeared the narrow sill of an Early English window, which has now been revealed by lowering part of the later sill to its level. A similar Jacobean window of two lights is on the south side of the nave at the west end.

A transeptal chapel projects from the eastern portion of the nave on the south. It is lighted on the east by a tall and narrow lancet, which seems to have been removed from another position, presumably from the nave wall when the transept was thrown out. Beside it is a small moulded bracket of decorated character. The south window is Jacobean, of three lights, corresponding with that which fronts it in the nave ; but the mullions of a decorated window have been used in it, and a fragment of tracery from such a window was found in the recent repairs. With the exception of these mullions; the three Jacobean windows of the Church are entirely of red brick ; and the careful manner in which they have been restored, with the brick work made good and pointed with cement, forms a characteristic feature in the renovation of the Church. In the eastern lancet is a single diamond-shaped quarry of ancient glass, bearing a large fly or bee and part of a legend—CIT · HANC · SIT—in letters of the fourteenth century upon a curved band ; the band forming a segment of a circle which when complete would occupy a group of nine similar quarries, this one being at the apex. It may be supposed to have belonged to the decorated window which is destroyed. A Jacobean sun-dial surmounts the gable of this transept.

Both nave and transept have beautiful Jacobean roofs of open timber work with ornamental pendants. The tie beam before the chancel bears the date 1615, and this is repeated upon a small wooden tablet :—

: 1615 : John
hambelden :
Henere wisse.
Church · Wordens,

The other tie-beams and the pairs of queenposts resting upon them had all been cut away, to make room for a coved plaster ceiling, above which the collars and upper posts remained intact. The hidden parts have now been brought to light and the lost parts have been reproduced.

There is no arch either to the transept or to the chancel. The old oak altar rails, with pilasters of inconvenient height, have been utilised to form a low chancel screen, and a lighter rail takes their place before the altar. The chancel is early decorated, lighted by two small cusped lancets on the south side and one on the north. It has also a very good east window of three lights and intersecting tracery, without cusps but with rich mouldings. The side walls of the chancel had bulged outwards, and two graves had been made with the feet dug half way through the foundations of the east wall, causing the window to collapse into a shapeless condition so that it appeared to a casual observer like the rudest debased work; but the walls have been thrust back into position and underpinned, and the stonework of the window has been carefully taken down and replaced. A simple bracket on each side of it, like that in the transept, has survived; and a piscina with ogee head containing an original stone shelf has been opened out in the south wall, and a square-headed aumbry in the north wall, at the east end. The chancel roof, being poor and modern, has been lined with a coved ceiling in square panels. Some plain stencilled patterns were found on the east wall, and some Elizabethan texts in the nave, but the remains were not sufficient to be of any value. Among the debris of the floor were found a few inlaid tiles, most of them having a simple pattern of a circle with fleur-de-lys, which have been laid below the chancel step. A shilling of Henry VIII., and a fragment of pottery which may be Roman-British, were the only other relics of interest.

At the west end is a gallery, with a front of open pilasters, supported by a beam with simple and effective carving, bearing the inscription:—

1676. JOHN BARRET • CHVRCH=
WILLIAM MOOARE • WARDENS.

This has been retained, but thrown somewhat further back. The oak pews of about the same period have been lowered and their doors have been removed. In the vestry is an oak chest, made of old panelling, and dated 1638. A painted panel with the arms of George II., formerly over the chancel, has been placed over the south doorway. The dormer windows which light the gallery have

been very effectively treated in accordance with the Jacobean character of the roof; and a plain timber porch of some antiquity, and also the south gable of the transept, have been dealt with in a similar manner. The architect, Mr. Mowbray, of Oxford, is to be congratulated on the success of his work. The result is a Church of Jacobean character with earlier features embodied in it, and with a simple chancel of the fourteenth century. It was re-opened December 15th, 1890, by the Bishop of Reading.

This is a fitting opportunity to place on record the discovery, a few years ago, of a very beautiful and well-executed seal, with the device of the Pelican feeding her young, surrounded by the legend: S' IOH'IS LE TANNVR DE BERREK. The name of Tanner still continues in the village. The seal is in the possession of Mr. W. R. Davies, of Wallingford.

