



## Some Berkshire Crosses.

*By John Denis De Vitre.*



CROSSES were formerly erected for almost any purpose to which a religious meaning could be attached, and were apparently excessively common ; indeed, the scarcity of notices that exist of them would seem to show that they were so common as to be ordinarily overlooked. Sometimes they were erected at the places where the corpse rested on its way to burial, as the Eleanor crosses at Waltham and Chasing ; crosses of this kind were erected that persons might pray for the soul of the deceased ; of this type there are none existing in Berkshire as far as I know.

Then there were the crosses erected in churchyards, from which it would seem that sermons used to be preached, as at St. Paul's Cross in London ; these churchyard crosses are most common of any, and I should be very glad to learn of any other use to which they were put.

Thirdly, there were the market crosses, round which markets were held, and from which proclamations were made ; these were also called "cheeping" crosses, from the Anglo-Saxon "cheap" to buy, from which word, I have been told, such towns as Chippenham, Chipping Norton, etc. take part of their names. It has also been suggested to me that crosses were erected in market places to remind persons of the sacredness of bargains, and because sales and fairs had originally much of a sacred character attaching to them.

Crosses were also erected by monasteries on the boundaries of the property, just as boundary stones are used nowadays. Doubtless crosses were often erected for other purposes beside those I have mentioned, but all the examples I have been able to find are either churchyard or market crosses. It may be worth noticing that almost all of the former type of cross stand on the south side of the church and face east and west ; sometimes there were two

crosses in the same town, not only a churchyard cross and one in the market place, but two market crosses; this occurs at Lambourn where there were formerly two crosses in the town, though I cannot find that there was ever one in the churchyard.

I should be very much obliged if anyone would tell me of any crosses not mentioned in my list, especially in the eastern part of the county, where I have not been able to go, and of any details of construction or customs connected with the same.

ABINGDON.—All traces of this cross have now utterly vanished, the market-house standing on the spot formerly occupied by it: there is a rude picture of it on the river end of the almshouses facing St. Helen's church, which corresponds in a very slight degree with the various notices I have been able to find about it.

Ashmole says "Leland and Camden both take notice of a cross formerly in this town, built of free-stone, and not inferior in workmanship to any in England," and again when talking about the brotherhood of the Holy Cross, founded in the reign of Henry VI., he says, "To them, as appeared from the arms of the trustees of this charity, was owing the stately cross mentioned before." This cross was destroyed by the Puritan soldiers under Sir William Waller during the civil wars.

Lysons also mentions it, saying that it stood on pillars, and that among the arms with which it was ornamented were those of Sir John Golafre\*; also that it was repaired in 1605 at the instance of Mr. Little, the historian of Abingdon. When the accommodation with the Scots was celebrated in this town, by order of Parliament, in 1641, the 106th psalm was sung at the cross by 2,000 choristers. Richard Symonds, an officer in King Charles' army, who was at Abingdon in May, 1644, says that it was adorned with three rows of statues, consisting of kings, saints, and bishops.

ARDINGTON.—There is an exceedingly picturesque cross in the churchyard, standing on the north side of the church; the steps and pedestal are the original but the shaft is modern, having been erected, I believe, in 1852, when the remains of the old shaft were removed to the intersection of four roads just below the church; the old shaft was apparently of the usual shape, square at the base and octagonal above, but at the present time has been worn almost round.

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\* In Clarke's Hundred of Wanting, the arms of Golafre are given as, Barry, nebulae of six argent and gules, on a bend sable three besants.

BOURTON.—There is here a cross standing in the middle of the village, consisting as usual of three steps and a pedestal and the shaft minus the top, which is indeed missing in almost all cases.

CHARNEY.—The cross here stands in the middle of the village, and consists of three steps, a pedestal and five feet of shaft, on the top of which is a square stone that seems to have been a sun-dial, but the height from the ground is too great since the bottom of the shaft is almost five feet from the ground, so that it is impossible to look down on to the top of the dial ; on the south side of the shaft is a very rude niche, whether original or not I cannot say. Is it likely to have been similar to those we see now in the shafts of wayside crosses in France, which usually contain a Madonna and Child ? In this village is part of a grange that formerly belonged to the Abbey of Abingdon.

CHADDLEWORTH.—On the south side of the church there are the remains of a cross, namely, three steps, a pedestal and two feet of shaft, of the ordinary type.

COLESHILL.—The cross here stands on a small piece of green by the side of the road, just south of the church ; whether this is its original situation or whether it has been removed from the church-yard I do not know ; it consists of merely one step, a pedestal and about eight feet of shaft.

COMPTON.—On the south of the church is the pedestal of a cross without any remains of steps or shafts.

CUMNOR.—Here the remains of the cross, consisting of three steps and pedestal, stand on the north side of the church ; it is said to have been erected by the monks of Abingdon to commemorate the end of a plague.

WEST CHALLOW.—In the vicarage garden here are the remains of the shaft of a stone cross ; that is to say the fragments look as though they had formerly formed part of the shaft, and there is also one piece that has evidently formed part of a cross itself as the arms and part of head above still remain. I have been told that there was once the head of a cross in this village with traces of the crucifixion on it, but I have been unable to discover anything about it.

DENCHWORTH.—In the middle of the village stands the shaft of an old cross on one step ; it is of the usual type. In the usual position, namely on the south side of the church is a cross, consisting of head, shaft, pedestal, and two steps, the cross and part of the shaft is modern the rest being original. The stone forming the

pedestal is of unusual size, and has its sides covered with lines, which I was told were Runic inscriptions, but have since heard it stated that this is not so, and that the marks are the work of village boys ; which view is correct I cannot say.

DIDCOT.—The cross here stands in the churchyard on the south side and is complete ; the shaft and cross were erected by Rev. John Watson, a former fellow of Brasenose College, about thirty-five years ago ; the pedestal and two steps are ancient.

DRAYTON.—Of the cross here, which stands in the churchyard on the south side of the church, only the pedestal is original, the rest being modern, and of the usual type.

EASTBURY.—The cross here is in the middle of the village ; the shaft and bottom step is modern having been erected in 1887 ; the pedestal itself is octagonal and stands on three steps which are also octagonal. On one side of the pedestal is the date 1741, and on another a date that looks like 1562, but may be anything else.

*(To be continued.)*

