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An Architectural Account of the Churches of North Moreton, Brightwell, Little Wittenham and Long Wittenham.

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(Continued from page 10).

There are two interesting features in the Chancel which by accident were omitted in the description of that part of the Church in the previous number of the Journal, viz :—

(1.) On the cill of the south window, opening to the Chantry, is the basin of a well moulded and deeply grooved piscina. The drain is carried down to the ground within a shaft attached to the wall. It may be either contemporary with the window, or the rather later work in the adjoining Chantry Chapel.

(2.) There are numerous old tiles collected from various parts of the Church, and now inserted in the floor beneath the high altar. They are chiefly red tiles with patterns of foliage and flowers in yellow and white glaze. Groups of four tiles together had in most instances completed the several designs. Some of a different type have a white fleur de lis on a green glazed ground, a somewhat unusual form of ornamentation.

The Chancel arch is of the transitional period, from the Early English to the decorated style. It has two chamfered orders on semi-circular responds and well moulded capitals. Above it are two large stone corbels, possibly to support the former beam on which the Holy Rood was supported. The nave roof is high pitched with tie beams and king posts. There are four arches (Fig. 11) between the nave and aisle with hoodmould and two chamfered orders supported on massive circular columns and a bracket on head at the east and west ends. They seem to be of the same date as the Chancel arch. On the north side of the Nave are two late decorated windows of date circ 1350. The east of three lights has beautiful flamboyant or flowing tracery, and some old glass in the head. There is a figure with dark tinted flesh with a white garment round the lower part of the body and down to the knees. He holds a cross and banner. The head and the hands are not clear, but there are apparently marks of the wounds on the side and feet, and if so, this is intended for Our Lord. The western window on this side is of two lights. In the south aisle are two more windows, no doubt insertions of the same date. These are both of two lights, and both contain remains of old glass. In the head of the eastern one is the Crucifixion. (Fig. 12). The body of Our Lord has sunk down. He has the Cruciform nimbus and a yellow loin cloth. The cross is green, as in the east chantry window, and the inscription across the upper part is on a red ground. The groundwork is composed of foliage designs within square compartments divided by broad yellow lines. The west window of this aisle is debased. There is a nice trefoil headed piscina in the south wall near the east end of the aisle of the late decorated period, and on the north side the lower doorway of the rood loft staircase with upper doorway opening out on the south side of the Chancel arch. This is of the 15th century date. (Fig. 13). Against the western column of the nave is the ancient tub-shaped font, with massive circular bowl on moulded base. It may be a relic of the old Norman Church. The tower arch has two fluted orders, the outer carried down the jambs without imposts to the ground, the inner supported on brackets. The west window is of three lights in the perpendicular style, the tower having been added to the Church in the 15th century.

In the Church chest are preserved two brasses. One which is to the memory of Thomas Mayne has figures of four sons, one a priest, and the following inscription :—

Hic jacet Thomas Mayne de Northmorton yoman
Qui obiit secundo die mensis Januarii Anno domini,
millio CCCC°LXXIX°, Cuius Anime ppiciet° de' Amen.

This is not mentioned by Ashmole in his *History and Antiquities of Berkshire*. The second has now the inscription only, but it is referred to by Ashmole as follows :—"In the middle of the Chapel, situate on the south side of the Chancel, is a fair marble stone somewhat raised from the ground and thereon fastened a Brass Plate bearing this inscription." :—

Here lyeth buried y° body of James Leaver, who departed this mortall life the eight day of Aprill, A° Dni 1629, being of y° age of fortye six yeares, who had issue by Katheren his wife nine children viz. five sones & fower daught^r being all living at y° time of his death, in memorie of whose loving husband y° said Katheren his deere wife at her one charge caused this memoriall to be made.

The righteous shal be had in Everlasting remembrance
and the memorie of the Just is blessed."

N.B.—This is the literal transcription, and not as given by Ashmole.

Ashmole also mentions the two following, which do not now exist :—

(1.) On a brass plate fixed on a grave-stone, laid in the body of the Church, is this inscription :—

"Pray for the Sowlls of Thomas Randolff, and Cecily his
Wife and all their Yssue, Anno Domini MCCCCLXXIV.
Obierunt Dominus Thomas and Cecilia, Thomas Mens.
Marc, Cecilia Septemb."

(2.) On a brass plate on a Grave-stone, lying in the South Isle, is this inscription :—

"Here lyeth the Body of Thomas Hill, who was buried
the XXth of January, MDCXII."

"As I was, so are you,

As I am, so shall you be."

There is not so much to note on the exterior of the Church. The south doorway within a porch belongs to the later Decorated period, and has a hoodmould, chamfered arch and jambs.

The north doorway is of the same date with well moulded hoodmould, and quarter round to the arch and jambs. The door looks very ancient. There is a quaint head above, and another one in the wall to the east of it. Very nice graduated buttresses of 14th century date support the walls. A noticeable feature in the exterior

of the Church is the large number of putlog holes, or small square spaces occupied by the scaffolding during the construction of the building. Many have been carefully filled in, while others have been made up with fragments of small stones and mortar. They are especially marked on the north side. (Fig. 14). The beautiful proportions of the east window of the Chancel can only be seen from the outside. In common with all the other windows it has an exterior hoodmould or label. (Fig. 15). The windows of the Chantry have labels terminating on heads, probably portraits of the family who endowed it. On the south side is the doorway to the Chapel with plain arch and hoodmould continued as a base moulding to the windows. The doorway is segmental headed on the interior side. Within a hollow of the cornice or wall plate on the south side is a series of sculptures, viz., from west, a bull, an animal with human head and cowl, a hare, a dragon, a human headed dragon, a cat, and another animal crouching at the east end. The tower is an addition of the 15th century. It has a very good parapet of open work quatrefoils, squareheaded double belfry lights with labels, and a single trefoiled opening on each face of the middle stage. The west doorway has a four centred arch and square label. There is part of an old sundial on the south-east buttress. In the south-west angle a newel staircase is carried up, but this does not show on the outside. There are five bells with the following dates and inscriptions. On the tenor bell :—

“Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Joseph Carter, 1591.

The fourth bell has a series of ornamental designs, and appears to be of pre-Reformation date.

On the third bell :—Richard Slade, Francis Leaver, C.W. 1684.

On the second bell :—Thomas Mears of London, fecit 1817.

On the treble bell :—“Love God.” 1641.

(Fig. 16). At the foot of the tower, in the Churchyard, are preserved some fragments of a very fine early 15th century stone screen or monument. Two portions have parts of a rich canopy and embattled transom, while another was evidently a large finial, with a richly vested figure on it, the lower part of which alone remains. Traces of colouring are still visible. These fragments are said to have come from Cholsey Church, during one of the drastic restorations to which that edifice was subjected, and it is also claimed for them that they were formerly in South Moreton Church. Whether either of these suppositions is correct, or whether they were portions of some beautiful work in North Moreton Church itself, it

furnishes us with an instance of the barbarisms which have been committed under the name of restoration in renovating our ancient Churches. There are many interesting buildings in the Parish. The present vicarage with an ancient brick chimney stack is of considerable antiquity, and the Chantry House, on the site at any rate of the residence of the Chaplains of the Chantry, contains an old hiding place and other early remains. A moat marks the boundary of the messuage assigned for the endowment of the Chantry.

A drive of about a mile will bring us to Brightwell, a place of some importance in early times, and dominated by a castle, which, however, seems to have been destroyed in the time of King Stephen. The site is not known now, though it may have been where an old house called Smalls still remains.

The Parish Church (Fig. 17), dedicated to St. Agatha, is a spacious edifice of stone, and contains much of architectural interest. It consists of a west tower, nave, aisles and chancel. The chancel and south walls have been rebuilt, but some of the ancient work has been preserved. The earliest part of the present Church is the south arcade of the nave and the south doorway, which belong to the transitional period from the Norman to the Early English style, and were erected quite at the end of the 12th century. A plain lancet window now inserted in the passage leading to the vestry, but formerly in the chancel, points to the chancel as being also of this date, and the tower arch is probably very little later. About the middle of the 14th century considerable alterations were made. Large windows were inserted in the chancel (Fig. 18), a north aisle was added, and beautiful windows of the same type as those at North Moreton introduced in both north and south aisles. About the year 1500 a clerestory was added to the nave, probably at the cost of the parson, or members of the families whose brasses still remain in the Church. The tower is debased of brick. The Church has been thoroughly restored, and a new organ chamber and vestry, font, etc., introduced. (Fig. 19). Taking up our position in the chancel, we note, as has already been stated, that this part of the edifice has been rebuilt. The east window of three lights is a very poor insertion in the decorated style. There are however two windows on the south and one on the north, of two-lights of the late decorated period. (Fig 20). In the usual place on the south side is a piscina and two sedilia. The former has a trefoiled arch, the latter cinquefoiled arches on a central shaft. A continuous hoodmould terminating east and west

on a head is carried above the three arches, being semi-circular above those of the sedilia. The work is very good and of the late decorated period. There is a plain aumbry in the north wall. The lancet window now in the passage leading to the organ chamber and vestry on the north side is small and plain, and was originally in the north chancel wall. The chancel roof is wagon shaped, and of the 15th century. There is no chancel arch but the old rood beam remains. (Fig. 21). There are three arches on either side of the nave, those on the south are of two plain recessed orders supported on lofty circular columns with octagonal abaci and capitals. These belong to quite the end of the 12th century. The arches of the north arcade are very good examples of the later decorated period of the middle of the 14th century. They have two chamfered orders and rest on octagonal columns with well moulded capitals. There are four two-light windows to the clerestory on either side of the nave. They are square-headed and of late perpendicular, circ 1500 date. In the south aisle is a two-light window on either side of the doorway, and a three-light window in the east, all of late decorated date with flamboyant tracery, the east window being of very good design. In the north aisle are two two-light windows, to the east of the doorway, and a similar one at the west end. There is also a very beautiful three-light window at the east end, now opening to the organ chamber, all being of the late decorated, or circ 1350, period. In the east on north window is some old glass, formerly in the east window of this aisle. There is the head of a female saint with cross and name, SCA. Margareta, below, a crowned head and other fragments. The roodloft staircase with doorways is squeezed in in the south-east corner of the north aisle. It was inserted in the late 15th century period. The tower arch is Early English, and not much later than the south nave arcade. It has an undercut hoodmould, two chamfered orders resting on a chamfered abacus, and shafts terminating half way down the jambs. Here are preserved three very interesting brasses. In the centre of the nave is a large blue stone with the effigies of a civilian and lady, the indent of a child, and the following inscription below:—

“Pray for the soules of Robert Court sometyme Audito to prynce.

Arthur and Jane his Wyfe the whiche Robt. decessyd the XXVIII day of June the yere of o' Lord MoV^eIX on whose soules ihu have mercy. Amen.”

Farther west, near the tower arch is another brass with figures of a civilian and lady, and inscription below as follows:

“Pray for the sowles of Rycharde Hampden and Jane his wyfe, the whych Jane decesyd the XXIII. day of february the yere of our lord MCCCCXII. on whose sowllis, Jhu have mercy. Amen.”

(Fig. 22). In the south aisle is a third brass to a priest fully vested and holding the chalice and wafer. The inscription below reads thus :

“ Hic jacet corpora mri Johis Scolffylde
q^d obiit xv die mes maii a^o dni' millimo.
V^eVII^o cui Aie ppicietur deus ame.”

It is singular that the word “corpora” has accidentally been used instead of “corpus.”

The figures on all the brasses are small and from 16 to 20 inches in height.

There is a very fine 17th century candelabra in the nave.

(Fig. 23). The south doorway is Transitional-Norman, semi-circular headed with a roll moulding having a fillet band on it on angle of outer order. There is a deep hollow on either side, flanked by a small half-round on the outer side, and a smaller half-round or bead on the inner. To this is a late undercut abacus, and capital with very nice foliage, some beading on that on east. The shaft is gone. There is a plain inner order with chamfered edge to arch and jambs. A portion of a rudely carved sundial remains on the east jamb. The north doorway, within a porch, is now the principal entrance. It has a well-moulded arch and jambs and hoodmould, and belongs to the later Decorated period. On the north of the organ chamber is the old north chancel doorway, also of the later Decorated period, with hoodmould on heads and plain arch. There are two old Cross Coffin lids in the Churchyard.

Not far from the Church is a cottage, one of a block, originally forming one house, where in an upper room is some curious and interesting painting. It is executed on the plaster and the colours are still very dark and distinct. There are three scenes, which may have formed part of a larger series. In the first picture is a figure in red, seated on a couch under a tent, and the hand of a second figure holding a candle. In the next is a figure seated, and another lying asleep at his or her feet. There is a tent painted red in the background. In the third are two figures under a tent, one with hand on the head of the other. There appears to be a nimbus round the head of the larger figure. I regret I cannot suggest any interpretation of the subject, though it probably represents some story from the bible or the popular literature of the day. It seems to be of the second half of the 16th century. There is only one very small window to the room, so that it is difficult to obtain a clear view of the pictures.

(To be continued.)