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Notes on the Churches of Stebenton, Hartwell, Didcot and Hagbourne.

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A DRIVE by a very circuitous route of two miles through flat moorland country will bring us to the out of the world, but picturesque, village of Hagbourne, teeming with old timber houses, and with pretty vistas, a place of much resort for artists. There is a large Village Cross near the Church (Fig. 39), a second in the hamlet of Crosscot, and a third in the hedge between the main village and hamlet, and these have given rise to the tradition that Hagbourne within the limits marked out by these crosses was a place of Sanctuary, and that an ancient knocker on the Church door was used to enable a fugitive to claim to take refuge in the Church. This is not mentioned in Lysons' *Magna Britannia*.

There appear to have been three manors here, the principal one with the Church at East Hagbourne having been given by Henry I. to his newly founded monastery at Cirencester, whose abbot had an occasional residence with a park here. The manor was granted at the Reformation to Sir Francis Knollys, and later came into the possession of Earl Craven. The manor of West Hagbourne was in the possession of the Windsor family from the time of William the Conqueror to the reign of Henry VI. or later, and that of Warling-

tons in West Hagbourne after being granted in 1231 to Edmund Earl of Cornwall, subsequently came to the Windsor family.

The Parish Church (Fig. 40), dedicated to St. Andrew, is in East Hagbourne, and is a very fine and interesting edifice, about 98½ feet in length by 46 feet across the nave and aisles. It was restored in 1859. It consists of a west tower, nave, aisles with north and south porches, chancel and chancel chapels. The earliest remaining portion is the south nave arcade, which is of late transitional Norman date of quite the end of the twelfth century. The Chancel seems to have been rebuilt about thirty years later (Fig. 41), and a chapel added on the south side. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the north arcade of the nave, and the aisle and north chancel chapel were added. Next, as we are informed on two brasses still remaining, the south aisle and south chapel were partly rebuilt and enlarged early in the fifteenth century, and towards the end of that century the east window was inserted (Fig. 42), the fine west tower was erected, the roofs were raised, and a clerestory added both to the nave and chancel, and the north and south porches were built, though they have been much altered in more recent times.

Let us now commence the description of the Church, starting as usual in the interior of the Chancel (Fig. 43). The east window is large four centred late Perpendicular, with a groove round the containing arch and five lights with very elaborate tracery, typical of the latter part of the fifteenth century. There are some small fragments of old glass, part of a pavement, etc., in a light brown colour. On the north and south sides of the Chancel near the east end is a single Early English lancet with a groove round the head and down the jambs, within a segmental headed containing arch, that on the north with a hoodmould terminating on a mask on east and on a lady's head on the west. That over the south window has modern block terminations. There are three steps within the splays below the lancet lights. In the north wall is a plain square aumbrey, in the south a rounded trefoiled arched piscina with a fillet band on the edge of the arch, and with well moulded quatrefoil shaped basin. There are three two-light clerestory windows on each side, square headed Perpendicular, one above the lancet, and the other two above the arches opening to the chapels. They were added at the same time as the east window, as was also the Chancel roof, which is flat with tie beams and panelling between the beams and wall brackets. The east beam is supported on a stone corbel with the head of a bishop on south, and another head with a kind

of turban on the north. The other stone corbels on each side are plain. On the south of the Chancel is a large mural tablet (Fig. 44) in mottled marble with coat of arms much obliterated, and another shield, and then on a brass plate the figure of a gentleman in armour kneeling at a faldstool with his four sons behind him, and on the other side his lady, also kneeling, with her four daughters behind her. Below, on another brass plate is the following inscription in plain capital letters :—

Here lyeth buried the body of Christian Keate ye wife & Widdow
of Hugh Keate of Hodcott, in the Countye of Barkēs Gent who
had issue be tweene them fowre soñes and fower daūghs viz. Hugh John
Francis and William, Mary Margret Christian & Elinor. he deþted this
Life ye 23rd day of March A° Dñi 1613 & was buried in ye prish Chancell
of West Ildesley in ye County a fore said) shee departed this life ye 14th
day of August A° Dni 1627.

For whose pious memorie William Keate there yongest sone erected
this memoriall.

Below, is another shield with three animals, which look like cats, passant guardant.

There are two arches between the Chancel and south Chapel, low Early English supported on a massive circular column and semi-circular responds. The capitals of the central column (Fig. 44) and eastern respond are ornamented with very rich conventional stiff leaved foliage, of the same character as that noted at North Moreton, Long Wittenham and Steventon in this same neighbourhood. The W capital is plain and has an undercut abacus. There is a small head above the central capital. When the Chapel was enlarged by Claricia Wyndesore, it appears to have been screened off from the Chancel, and the grooves still remain on the capitals, where this screen, which has been removed, was formerly fixed in. There is a three-light window in the east, and a two-light in the south wall, both plain perpendicular work of the beginning of the 15th century. Each has a groove round the arch. In the south wall is a piscina with projecting basin, and a rich canopy with ogee arch and a quatrefoil on either side. It is suggested that this is an insertion, and was formerly part of a window. The roof is flat and has been altered in Jacobean times. There is a squint through to the Chancel, carried through the wall to the east of the east respond. Some fragments of old glass remain in the south window.

There are two arches of good decorated character between the Chancel and north Chapel, with two orders, having the quarter

round on the outer, and plain chamfered inner order. They are supported on an octagonal column, and semi-octagonal responds with plain capital having a roll moulding above and round the neck below. There is a mutilated head above the central column, apparently to support the hoodmould, which has now gone. The eastern part of the Chapel is now screened off for the vestry. The screen is partly old, with some linen panelling on the lower part. The east window is excellent three-light decorated, with quatrefoils in the head, and chamfered containing arch. There is a similar three-light window on the north side. In the east window are some very nice fragments of old glass, with canopies, pinnacles, and parts of three angels swinging censers, mainly of the fifteenth century. In the head of the north window (Fig. 46) is a pattern of foliage on green and brown grounds, and below two panels of early fourteenth century glass. On the east is the Nativity. The Blessed Virgin is recumbent on the couch, which has red drapery, and holds the Infant Christ in front of her, while Joseph stands at the foot of the bed. The coverlet is white, the ground blue. At the back is a panelled structure with yellow roof, above which are portrayed the heads of the ox in red and the ass in white, gazing at the Holy Family. Above is a rich canopy filling up the head of the panel, with foliage in brown and red on the border enclosing the sun with human face in the centre, and below two roses or eight rayed stars in brown on a blue ground. In the western compartment is the Blessed Virgin with red nimbus, green robe and red cloak, seated on a panelled settee. The Infant Saviour in plain brown garment is standing on her lap, and holds a basket containing three white pigeons, their heads and necks alone visible. The background is a rich blue formed by a pattern of roses within triangular compartments. Does this represent the presentation in the Temple? The figures both in this and the adjoining panel are under semi-circular arches in white with trefoiled fringe, and there is a border above and on each side of leaves in red and brown. A small fragment of an inscription does not belong here. On the south side of the east window is a large stone bracket with shield on the front. In the south wall close to the east end is a piscina (Fig. 47) with segmental headed crocketed canopy having an inner cinque-foiled arch, and projecting octagonal basin, resting on a bracket carved into a crowned head. In the wall above is carved an anchor with a star over each fluke. Was this a Chapel of St. Clement? The Communion table preserved here is of wood of

the Jacobean period. The Chancel arch is Early English with two plain chamfered orders on undercut abacus, the inner order resting on large brackets with singular carving, that on the south (Fig. 48a) with three female heads, that on the north (Fig. 48b) with a large head of a lion with great open mouth and quaintly represented hair.

There are three arches between the nave and aisles (Fig. 49). Those on the South are transitional Norman lofty and obtusely pointed with two plain orders, supported on round columns and half-round responds, with plain octagonal capitals. There are large claws in the form of leaves to the bases. At the east end on the respond on the nave side has been inserted a large sculptured human head (Fig. 50a), perhaps of Norman date. Across the east end of the aisle the old 17th century communion rails with well carved balusters have been placed to form a screen between the aisle and chapel. On the west capital of the western column has been carved a small trefoil headed recess (Fig. 50b), which is described in the Ecclesiastical Topography as a Chrismatory arch. It was cut out in the 15th century, probably when the beautiful font was placed in its present situation adjoining it. In the aisle are two two-light windows on south, and a three-light on west, all of plain perpendicular character corresponding with those in the south chapel. There are some fragments of old glass in the south windows. The roof is a plain lean-to with large bosses, the east one a monster head. The font (Fig. 51) stands at the west end of this aisle, and is very fine late perpendicular, of large dimensions and beautiful proportion, with octagonal panelled bowl having a circle enclosing a quatrefoil on each face. Within the quatrefoils on the cardinal faces is a rose, on the alternate faces a shield, on which are still remains of colour, on one on south-west a saltire on a red ground, probably for Windsor, on north-east a cross, on north-west a fesse on a dark ground, perhaps for York, on south-east quarterly with some birds' heads, etc. The tinctures are mainly obliterated so that it is not possible to identify the several bearings. There is a band round the stem, and well moulded base. It has a lead lining and lead round the upper verge.

In north-east corner of nave is the pulpit of wood of 15th century date with four panels richly carved with flowing tracery and cornice above, and a border of quatrefoils within circles round the lower part. It is supported on a slender central stem and four flying buttresses or shafts meeting at the base. There is a small buttress with foliated finial at the angle between each panel. In

this north-east corner is probably walled up the old staircase to the rood loft.

There are three clerestory windows on each side of the nave with two trefoil-headed lights within square frames, and one more single light farther west, of late 15th century date. The roof (Fig. 52) is a very fine specimen of perpendicular work, low pitched with tie beams and bosses at the centre. On the centre beam on east side of boss is carved a hunting scene, viz. : a hound chasing a stag, and on the west side a hound biting a stag. On the west side of the boss of the next beam west is the Tudor rose. Along the wall plate are a series of shields, with various devices, some of which are alleged to illustrate the work of the ancient Freemasons. On the south side from east is (1) a double headed eagle, (2) a crosier, (3) a cross with a cross above, (4) a pair of compasses. On north side from east (1) a bishop's mitre, (2) a tree with coils for the roots (3) a double C banded together, called in heraldry a millrind, and (4) a carpenter's square. The spaces between the wall brackets and tie beams are panelled.

The arches between the nave and north aisle are of early 14th century date, and are of two orders with quarter round on outer and chamfered inner order, on low octagonal columns and semi-octagonal responds and capitals in every detail corresponding with the arches from the Chancel to the north chapel. There are heads above the columns both on the side towards the nave and aisle, indicating a continuous hoodmould, now destroyed. There are two two-light windows on the north side, the eastern one partly in the chapel and similar to those in the chapel. There are some fragments of old glass in the head of each. At the east end is a large monument against the wall with inscription to John Phillips who died December 28th, 1775.

On the floor are three inscriptions in brass (Fig. 53). Two of them are not mentioned by Ashmole. The third to Claricia Wyndesore was in his time in the Chancel. The other two were originally in the south aisle as that must be the aisle referred to as having been founded, that is partly rebuilt, by John York.

The inscriptions read as follows and are interesting as they record the date of part of the existing Church :—

Orate specialiter p aia bz Johannis York et Johā
ne uxoris eius qui obierunt quinto die mess'

Septembris anno dñi millimo cccc° xl° quinto.

[? Did they die on the same day.]

Orate specialiter p aia Johis york fundatoris isti'
Ile qui obiit quintodecimo die mensis Julii anno
domini millimo cccc° xvj°.

Hic jacet Claricia Wyndsore quondā dñā de West hakburn
et uxor Johis york que fieri fecit istā capellā que obiit
xxiv° die marcii a° dñi M° CCCC° III° cui aiē ppiciet' dē Amen.

There was also formerly on the Chancel floor, the figure of a man in gown and his wife, and the following inscription —

of your charite pray for the soulles of John Angyer and
Alys his wife, which departed this present life to the
Mercy of Almighty God, the xxxist yeare of the Reigne of
our Sovereigne Lord King Henry VIII. On whose soulle
Jhesu have mercy.

The Royal Arms much obscured are preserved at the west end of this aisle.

The tower arch is somewhat puzzling. It is lofty and with an undercut hoodmould on both east and west face. It has a chamfered outer and quarter round to inner order, clumsy capitals and half-round responds. It appears to be early English and to have been altered when the later 15th century tower was built. The west window is perpendicular of three-lights, and on north side is a two-light square headed window within segmental headed containing arch of the same date. There are some large ledger stones preserved here, one to the Tirrells. There is on the west wall an 18th century picture of David playing the harp and the text below

Let everything that hath breath
Praise the Lord.

The south doorway within a Porch is segmental headed late 15th century work with a deep groove to the soffit of the arch and down the jambs. The door and the ironwork are old. There is a very large solid iron bar fitting into deep holes in the wall on the inside. On the west side of the porch is an old door with some nice ironwork, supposed to have been the entrance to the rood loft. The porch is low and has been altered, but is probably Perpendicular with the upper portion in timber on low stone wall on either side. Along the south aisle are a series of nice buttresses, and there is a cornice with some quaint heads, a man with flowing cap, a lion, etc., sculptured on it. The windows have plain external hoodmoulds. The lancet on south side of the Chancel has a hoodmould with mask termination on east and head of a priest on the west. There is an Early English stringcourse along the south and north walls and over

the angle buttresses of the Chancel. The east window has the hoodmould terminating on angels holding shields, and there is a base moulding below. The north window has mask terminations to the hoodmould. The Decorated windows to the north chapel and aisle have the roll-moulding on the hoodmoulds. There are three buttresses all much patched. This aisle has been coated with rough-cast. There is an interesting cornice along the north side of the clerestory with a small niche for a figure in the centre, and a series of sculptures, a lion, the busts of a man and lady, a female holding a wheel (perhaps St. Catherine) and some quaint heads. The north doorway within a porch (Fig. 54) is good Decorated with undercut hoodmould and hollow and quarter-round to arch and jambs. The door is old with some old ironwork, and a quaint little sanctuary knocker with a circular scutcheon and small handle. This has given rise to the tradition that the right of sanctuary within the limits marked out by the Crosses was exercised here. The outer arch of the porch, which has been much renewed, is of timber late Perpendicular. The stone walls supporting the porch are probably old.

The west tower (Fig. 55) is very fine, being built of a rich green coloured stone. It is embattled, with a two-light belfry window within semicircular headed containing arch on each face, a small trefoil headed light on middle stage north and west. The two-light north window on lower stage has hoodmould terminating on mutilated heads. The west window has the hoodmould terminating on shields, supported on the head of a man on north and of a lady on the south side. Her shield has a crescent on a chief, his a bird on the left side, both are much weather-worn. There is a turret with excellent newel staircase on the north side, leading up to the roof, and capped by a conical top. In the centre of the east parapet is a very pretty little sanctus bell-cote (Fig. 56) with open sides and spirelet, and still containing the bell, which has a pattern of fleur-de-lys engraved on it. The turret is supported on four shafts capped by pinnacles. It is of very late Perpendicular work. There is a cornice of heads round the upper part of the tower, which is one of the best specimens of late 15th century work in the County. There is a peal of eight bells, which has the reputation of being one of the finest and most harmonious in the Diocese.