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Notes on the Churches of Frilsham, Battendon, Ashampstead, Hampstead Norreys and Aldworth.

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A drive of between two and three miles along very narrow lanes will bring us to Ashampstead, where the Church (Fig. 17) is chiefly interesting for the mural paintings, which were discovered in 1895. The history of the Parish is very meagre. In the time of Edward III. Sir Gilbert de Ellerfield obtained the Manor in exchange for other lands which he made over to the King. It afterwards came to the Langfords, and has since changed hands on more than one occasion. Thomas de Coleshill (query of Aldermaston) died seized of the Manor of the Wyle in 1357. There is a third Manor of Hartridge, which is supposed to be the same estate which was anciently held by the tenure of keeping a Goss-Hawk for the King.

The Church (Fig. 18) is dedicated to St. Clement, and is the only one in the Diocese with the exception of a modern one at

Oxford, dedicated to that Saint. It was thoroughly and drastically restored in 1849, and a thick coating of brown stucco was probably then laid on the interior walls. In 1895 certain needed repairs were carried out, and it was then that the paintings, which were partly visible under the brown wash, were laid bare by the late Vicar. It was formerly a parochial chapel attached to Basildon. The Church is of simple plan, consisting of a western bell turret, nave with modern vestry on the north side and Chancel. It seems to have been erected about the year 1200, when a considerable amount of Church building was going on in the County. Some perpendicular windows have been inserted, and the west turret with its supports was also a 15th century addition. The triple lancet at the east end was probably put in during the 1849 restoration. Starting in the interior of the Chancel (Fig. 19) we notice on the north and south sides two widely splayed obtusely pointed lancets, which Parker, in the *Ecclesiastical Topography*, considers to be of transitional Norman date. The eastern portions of the lower walls have been panelled, but an opening has been cut on the south side revealing a plain square opening for the piscina with half the basin remaining. The roof is high pitched with tie beams and good frame work. There is no Chancel arch, but the roodbeam remains with a plaster partition filling up the space above. In the nave is one lancet on the north side, and three squareheaded perpendicular windows, the central one of three lights, the other two of two lights on the south side. The roof is high pitched and with tie beams. At the west (Fig. 20) end are the timber supports for the turret, probably of late 15th century date. There is a single lancet in the west wall. There are several tablets on the north wall, one near the east end to Mary Pocock. As has been stated, the chief object of interest in the Church is the scheme of Mural Painting, which has been described in the *Archæological Journal*, Vol. LIII. page 177, *The Reliquary and Illustrated Archæologist*, Vol. II., page 53, and the *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæological Journal*, Vol. II., page 9. Last year an expert was engaged to still further explore the walls, but very little additional painting was discovered. Some of the brown wash has been removed from the splays of the Chancel windows, and traces of colour with foliage have been exposed on the west window on the south side. Along the north wall is a pattern of roses on stems and scroll ornament, and above a rich scroll border all in red (Fig. 21). On the north wall on the east side of the west lancet is a very pretty Consecration Cross with a cross patee in white on a red ground within a

yellow circular border. On the north wall of the nave the space to the east of the lancet window is occupied by the Pocock and another tablet, but traces of a subject no doubt in continuation of the series to the west of it can be made out, with part of a border in red with a kind of antique pattern in red. On both splays of the adjoining window is a bold scroll pattern in yellow and red, with bunches of fruit or ivy berries. Adjoining this, and between the window and the doorway, are four subjects (Fig. 22) under trefoil-headed arches, similar to those at West Chiltington Church, Sussex. The ground-work within the arches is deep crimson and vermilion alternately, outside the same colours being reversed. The arches seem to have been painted blue. There are battlements with spires at intervals above. The first subject from the west is the Annunciation. On the east side is the Blessed Virgin with nimbus and red cloak and upraised hand, and the Holy Dove in white close to her ear. The western portion with the Archangel has perished, the ground within the arch is crimson, and vermilion outside. In the next compartment the ground-work is vermilion inside and crimson outside the arch. Here is a representation of the Salutation or Visitation. The Blessed Virgin and Elizabeth are standing facing and with hands raised towards each other. They are in flowing robes, but the colour has gone. They are within a tent with the side open. The next compartment has the ground-work crimson within and vermilion outside the arch. It is the most perfect and interesting of the series, and represents the Nativity. On the lower level is the Blessed Virgin lying on a couch with crimson drapery. Her dress is outlined in red. Her left hand is stretched out towards a table above her on which her Divine Son is lying, with Joseph and an Angel at the foot, and the heads of the ox and the ass appearing behind in adoration of the Holy Child. Within the next compartment, where the ground colour is vermilion within and crimson outside the arch, is the Angel appearing to the Shepherds. He has a robe down to the ankles and outspread wing. He has the right hand stretched out towards three figures, one in crimson robe with hand raised to the head, only parts of the others being visible, one holding a staff. Part of an animal, probably a lamb, was discernible, but it is doubtful if it can now be made out. There is foliage in white and crimson. The arches are from 36 to 33 inches in height and 33 inches in breadth, and the figures vary from 30 to 27 inches in height. Above is the rich border with the antique scroll in red on a white ground and traces of paintings above, but obliterated by a

set of black letter commandments. Over the doorway is an indistinct subject mixed up with a black letter text. It may, and ought to, be St. Christopher, as part of an arm clad in red grasping a yellow staff can be made out. There are several more texts on the walls, and these are identified by the entry in the Churchwardens' accounts for 1725: "Pd. the paynter for drawing the sentences in the Church, £2 10s. od." When the principal series of paintings were discovered some of the more delicate colours were visible, but I doubt if they can now be made out. On the plaster space over the rood beam has been a large subject, which is not now decipherable. One would expect the Doom to be represented here, but in the accounts of the paintings soon after their discovery it is stated that here was the Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John on either side of the Cross. In the gable is a large circular object surrounded by rays, which it is suggested is a sunflower, but with more probability may be identified as the sun. This painting is probably of the 15th century, while the more important series may have been executed in the second half of the 13th century.

The north doorway (Fig. 23) within a modern vestry has a chamfered hoodmould possibly terminating on heads, and has a plain chamfered arch and jambs. It is obtusely pointed and may be of the transitional Norman period. On the interior side the arch is segmental-headed and has some colouring on the soffit. The south doorway has the interior arch much loftier than the exterior. On the outside (Fig. 24) it is pointed with an undercut label or hoodmould, two plain chamfered orders to the arch and jambs and small chamfered abacus. There is the original chamfered stringcourse along the west wall. The turret is composed of boards and the spire of wooden shingles. The lancet windows have no dripstones or hoodmoulds. The perpendicular windows are much modernised and have external labels. There is a small plain blocked doorway on the south of the Chancel. In the north wall of the nave is the stump of a tree. The walls are covered with rough cast. The length of the Church is given as 78ft. 3ins. ; the Chancel is 14ft. wide, the nave being 2ft. 9ins. broader on the north and 3ft. 2ins. on the south side. Close to the Church is Church Cottage. On the walls of one of the rooms is some decorative painting in black and yellow, probably of 16th century date.

A drive of about two miles, partly over an unenclosed lane, will bring us to Hampstead Norreys or Norris, as it is now called. It was formerly styled Hampstead Cifrewast and Hampstead Ferrars, as

it belonged successively to those families. An admirable paper on this Parish and the many early antiquities within its borders was read by that distinguished antiquary Mr. Walter Money, F.S.A., at a meeting of the Newbury and District Field Club in 1885, and we find a large number of references to this Parish in ancient Records. There are several Manors, which all got into the possession of the Norreys and afterwards to the Bertie family, the Manor of Bodenhampstead or Bothampstead having previously belonged to the De la Beches and Langfords. Mr. Money gives a very full genealogy of the Norreys family, and many other interesting details, which embrace almost everything which can be said of the Parish. At the secluded hamlet of Wellhouse resided for many generations the family of Doncastle. Oakhurst, or Oakhouse, formerly belonged to Poughley Priory, and with other possessions of that Priory was appropriated by Cardinal Wolsey for the endowment of his new College of Christ Church, Oxford. Lysons informs us that the great tithes were appropriated to the Priory of Goring in Oxfordshire.

The Parish Church (Fig. 25), which is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, is dedicated to St. Mary, and consists of a west tower, nave with north porch and chancel. It appears to have been built very late in the 12th century, and to have been completed as we now see it, with some slight additions, early in the 13th century. Some alterations took place in the 15th century, when the tower was repaired, some windows inserted and the rood-loft stairs constructed, and unfortunately in more modern times a more drastic restoration was carried out. Even before this much mischief was done to the Church, a Norman font having been given away by the Churchwardens, while the two brasses mentioned by Ashmole, with the following inscriptions, have long since disappeared :—

“Hic jacet Ricardus Smert qui obiit 23 die Maii 1468, cujus

“anime propicietur Deus Amen.”

“Hic jacet Johannes Pocock, qui obiit 21 die Mensis Junii

“an Domini Millimo ccccxxxiii cujus anime propicietur

“Deus Amen.”

The dimensions of the Church are given as 108 feet in length by $20\frac{1}{2}$ feet in breadth.

Taking up our position in the interior of the Chancel (Fig. 26) we first notice the east windows, which are of very good design, but do not appear to correspond with the description in the Ecclesiastical Topography. There are two lancets (Fig. 27) widely splayed

with the keel shaped moulding round and down the jambs of the containing arches. On the north is a single wide splayed lancet, and there are two more lancets on the south, the western one having a groove round the arch, and brought down in the wall so as to form a low side window. In the north wall is a large and deep aumbrey with two oblong openings. On the south side (Fig. 28) is a piscina with early flat trefoiled canopy and shelf, and circular basin and half shaft attached to the wall. The eastern part of the Chancel roof is panelled and new, the western part high pitched and partly of 15th century date. The present Chancel arch is new, but we are informed that the old Chancel arch was of Transitional Norman date with solid partition wall above, but all has been swept away. We may, therefore, consider that the building of the Church was commenced at the west end and carried on to the east, and that the date of the Chancel is quite the beginning of the 13th century. At the restoration of the Church remains of a stone screen were found, but unfortunately they were not preserved.

The nave roof (Fig. 29) is underdrawn with pendants and a date 1635 records the time of its construction. In the north wall quite at the east end are the upper and lower doorways (Fig. 30A) and the steps, which terminate six feet from the ground, leading to the rood-loft. A tiny window was inserted to light the staircase. On the south side is a small trefoiled window within a square frame on a high level forming a high side window to give light to the rood-loft. All this work was an addition of the late 15th century. In the south wall near the east end is a plain recess with basin for the piscina. On south of the nave are two two-light windows in the Perpendicular style but very much renewed. In the east splay of the western (Fig. 30B) of these is a plain trefoiled canopy and embattled pedestal for a figure. Near the west end, also in the south wall, are two lancets the west one trefoil-headed. On the north side are three single lancets, and near the west end a double lancet within a containing arch having a trefoiled fringe. By the north doorway is a deep arched recess (query for the holy water stoup) and let into the wall the head of a Cross (Fig. 31A). It has a small Maltese Cross at the centre and is very well carved. Here is the modern font, and another one described by Mr. Money as a "pudding basin" presented to the Church by Mr. Benjamin Matthews in 1768, as we learn from the inscription on the bowl. It was then that the old Norman font was given to Mr. Ackerman, and was presented by him to Stone Church in Buckinghamshire, where it still remains.

It is a very fine example of Norman work, and is enriched with varied sculpture. The parishioners certainly made a poor bargain in obtaining the "pudding basin" for this large and elegant specimen of Norman work.

On the south side of the nave and within the walled-up Norman arch is a very interesting sculpture of a Knight on a pale blue stone (Fig. 31B). It had been used as a step for the priest's door, and was taken up and placed in its present position. It represents a mailed Knight with flat closed helm, on horseback, with long spear held straight before him and a shield in front of his body. From the shape of the helm and other features, Mr. Money puts the date as of the latter part of the 12th century. It is probably a relic of the former Church. On the wall adjoining is (Fig. 32) a large and interesting painting, the only one preserved out of several discovered during the restoration of the Church. A Consecration Cross was found on the north wall of the nave. At the same time "many fragments of alabaster figures, which probably belonged to an ancient reredos or a side altar demolished at the Reformation, were found under the floor of the Church." Query, have they been preserved? The existing painting was enclosed within a glazed panel, and has been much injured. It has recently been carefully treated and proper steps have been taken to ensure its preservation. Under a trefoiled arch is nearly a full-sized figure of the Blessed Virgin. The back ground is a deep red, The figure of the Virgin is not very clear, but her robe is outlined in red. She is seated and bending over towards her Divine Infant Son, who is lying in her lap. The arch rests on foliated capitals and shafts. The date seems to be of the 13th century. It must have been a painting of great delicacy and beauty. The tower arch is much hidden by the gallery. It is obtusely pointed transition Norman with chamfered hoodmould and arch, plain jambs and modern massive abaci. There is a newel staircase up to the tower, with nice 15th century doorway on north side. The earliest bell dates from 1619, and was cast by Henry Knight, the celebrated bell-founder of Reading. The west window is of three lights in the perpendicular style. There are several solid old oak benches. The interior arches of the north and south doorways are segmental-headed.

(To be continued.)