

and old. The tower (Fig. 73) is of debased character, embattled, with two-light belfry windows, and single light on middle stage, north and south. There are angle buttresses. On a circular panel on the north side is a date 1564, and part of an inscription. This would probably commemorate the rebuilding of the tower. The south porch and doorway are new, but the ironwork on the door looks old. The east window of the old Chancel is hidden by the luxuriant growth of a Virginia creeper. There is an external hood-mould to the western Decorated window on the north side, also one graduated buttress (Fig. 74). The old portions of the Church are covered with roughcast. There are five bells. The first has the following inscription round the shoulder: "PRAYSED BE THY NAME O LORD THAT HAS SENTE, 1578." Below, the Founder's Initials divided by a Bell. The second, Recast. The third, with inscription: "GOD BE OVR SPYD IN OVR BEGYNYNG." On the waist is a Cross Fleury, and on either side, the Initials, W. T. Date middle of 16th century. The fourth, tenor, inscribed "Robt. Wells, Aldbourne, Fecit 1793." The small bell is inscribed "Robt. & Jo. Wells, Aldbourne." A walk or drive of about two miles to Wantage will finish up a delightful day.

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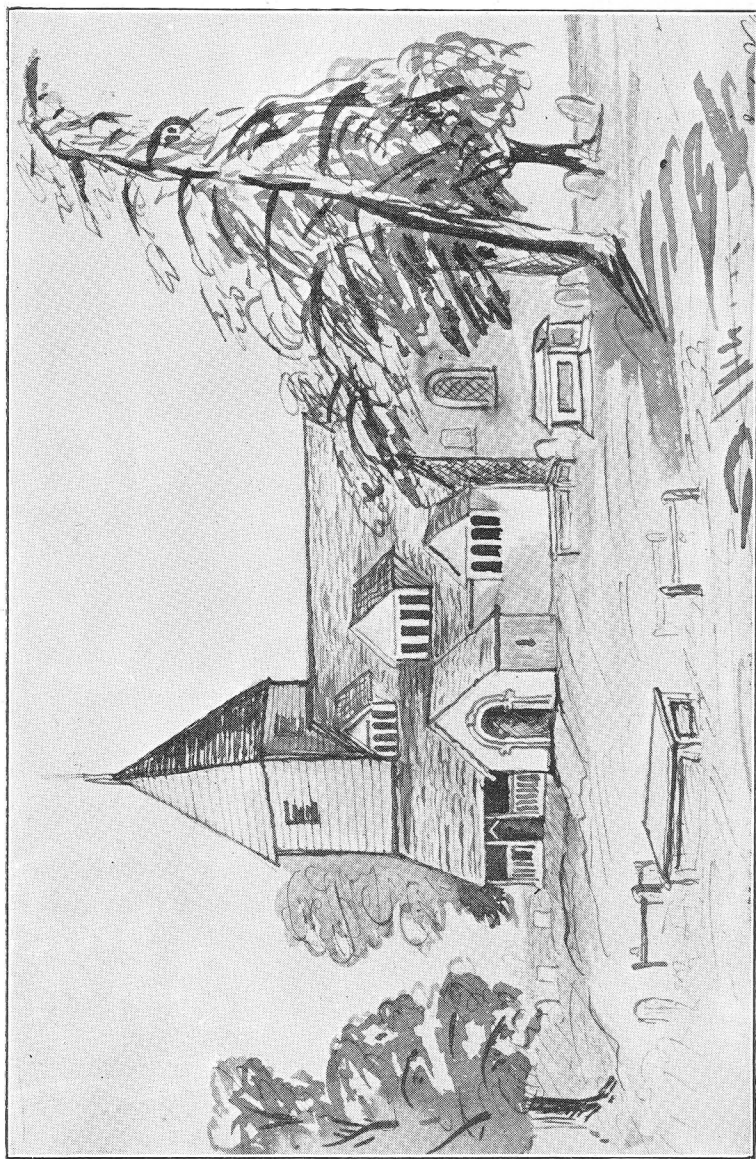
## Stanford Dingley, 1864—1918.

*By Miss A. L. Valpy.*

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**W**HEN I first went to Stanford Dingley in 1864 my Father had just assumed the duties of Rector of the place. The living was a family one in those days, and he was the fourth of the name to officiate in the little old Church. The village is very small, but, apparently, it had always been flourishing, as there had been a malt house, which had been closed before we arrived, and there had also been, and was still, a large tannery, belonging to, and worked by, Mr. George May, an intelligent man, who was always a sympathetic and helpful friend to the Rector of the parish, and acted as his churchwarden.

A small stream ran through the place and turned the wheel of the tan-yard, and filled the vats containing the skins, and then made



**STANFORD DINGLEY CHURCH.**

*A sketch by Mrs. Cope from a water colour by D. Cooper, in the possession of Miss Valpy.*

its way across the road, making itself a bed through the meadows, before joining the Kimber about half-a-mile further on. (The Kimber, by the way, has its rise in the grounds of Frogmore Farm, springing up at a depth of 16 feet, in what can only be described as a cauldron of boiling sand, a most unique spectacle, which, strangely enough, is almost unknown, and is little appreciated even by the people living near).

There was a bridge, for foot passengers only, over the stream, but all wheeled vehicles had to go through the open ford, and at times, during the winter, when the water became fairly deep, this crossing became very uncomfortable, especially for the low basket carriages much in vogue at the time. At last Mr. May roused the county and the neighbouring landowners, and a substantial bridge was built, greatly to the satisfaction of all who had to pass over it.

Up to that time the only other way of crossing the shallower part of the stream was by stepping stones, which, possibly, may have given their name to the village, *i.e.*, "A Stone Ford," but in Domesday the old name is recorded as "Stanworde."

The Church itself contains the narrowest nave in the county, and has many points of interest. Two Norman arches and a Saxon font proclaim its age, as also do the thickness of the walls and its solid oaken door, with enormously long hinges and double lock. The door is further enriched by its "sanctuary ring," and it is difficult to account for this, as the privilege of possessing a "sanctuary ring" was generally only accorded to large towns, and specially holy places. There are a few "consecration crosses" carved in the stone work inside the Church. There are three very perfect brasses, one to Margaret Dyneley, with a Latin epitaph, which gives the gruesome intelligence that she became "the food of worms"; another to Thomas Lyford, and another to a gentleman with an Elizabethan ruff round his neck. The epitaph has been removed from this brass, but I cannot help wondering whether it was put down in memory of one, Teesdale, by name, who was a former inhabitant of Stanford Dingley—and of whom an engraving is still extant,—who was one of the founders of Pembroke College, Oxford, and who was a benefactor of Roysse's School at Abingdon, founding a scholarship for Pembroke College with the proviso that special preference was to be given for competitors from Roysse's School.

The intention, evidently, was to build the Church in cruciform, and a solid block of masonry on the north side of the Church should have helped to support the central tower, but the plan must

have been given up, and a little four-square "pigeon coop," containing four bells, at the west end is all that remains.

The outside walls are faced with flint, but the old chancel must have fallen down, and has been replaced by "three walls and a roof," which is all that can be said of the present erection. The fine oak roof was hidden by a ceiling, and a gallery at the west end contained a barrel organ, with, I *think*, only four barrels, so that the choice of tunes to which we sang our hymns was, to say the least, somewhat limited !

The beams of the ceiling are of oak, but the rafters are chestnut wood, which seems to have been plentiful in those days, for the Churchyard is planted with magnificent Spanish chestnut trees, the fruit of which is a yearly joy to the children of the parish, and many are the panes of glass which have been broken by the sticks and stones thrown to bring the prickly treasures down !

There was a large reading desk and a high pulpit, with a handsome sounding board, and the usual high pews. The chief farmer and his two sisters claimed one pew, which would easily have seated sixteen people, but woe betide the luckless wight who dared intrude himself inside the sacred spot !

When the Church was restored it was found that the inside walls were *covered* with interesting frescoes, which, of course, had been carefully whitewashed over at the time of the Reformation. St. Christopher was there, 7ft. high ; King Edward the Martyr holding a heart, with three darts in it ; a Bishop in full canonicals, mitre and pastoral staff ; a vivid picture of the Angel blowing the last trump, and the dead arising around and beneath it ; a priest exorcising an evil spirit, which is seen to be leaving the mouth of the possessed ; and where the figures end scroll-work was used to fill in the gaps. This scroll-work was (badly) reproduced in Beenham Church about 30 years ago.

Some very interesting encaustic tiles were found among the bricks of the chancel floor, and which are now embedded in the chancel arch for safety and to be better seen.

It seems apparent that a Lady Chapel was to have been built on to the south aisle, but that plan also evidently had to be abandoned. The porch doorway is interesting, with a stone rose, carved and coloured.

The old ridge tiles still survive, and there is one good (rose) window to the right, as one enters the Church. The shadow of the

south aisle, falling on the wall of the chancel, has been marked off in white paint, to show the hours of 12, 1, 2 and 3 o'clock. The belfry is held up with two solid posts of heart of oak, at least fifteen to eighteen inches thick. "Uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture," of course, deck the graves of the dead. The quaintest epitaph prays

"Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
Be to me what Adam lost!"

Almost a Miltonian touch!

The little lean-to verandah-like erection, shewn in the sketch of the Church as it was when we first knew it, was called Basden's House, but it was—unfortunately—removed to put in a new window which seemed necessary for the west end of the Church.

The divisions of the parishes were very strange in the old days. The glebe meadow in front of the Rectory gates is in Bucklebury parish, and of the two public-houses which face each other on either side of the old tan-yard, one is in Bucklebury and the other in Stanford. About one hundred yards further we have the extreme edge of Bradfield parish. This made the work of the Rector rather difficult; when, as *was* sometimes the case, the incumbents of the two other parishes were somewhat thin-skinned, and my father had to answer to charges of "poaching on their preserves"!

Some of the entries in the old parish registers bring us back to the times when it was incumbent for the deceased to be "buried in woollen," and some of the funerals were of "Flanders' weavers." Hunting was not thought much of in the olden days, manifestly, for one of the items chronicles the payment of one shilling to some one who was successful in "killing a fox"—*not* by hunting it with dogs and horses, be it understood!

I do not remember any folk-lore connected with the neighbourhood, but ghosts were believed in, and the Rectory itself was supposed to be haunted; and the ghost of a Mr. Kidgell, who was born and lived for eighty years and died in one of the principal houses in the village, was seen after death, if we may believe all reports.

I well remember one night, when a friend, a young man from London, had been playing tennis all the afternoon, had wandered down one of the lanes, still in his white flannels, in the gathering dusk. He was leaning over a gate at the turn of the road, and heard voices coming towards him, and realised that two young women were expressing their dread of that particular lane. One of

them was just declaring that she had disliked it ever since she had seen an apparition, "and"—with a shriek—"There it is now"! Whereon, both ladies fled, and, of course, the object in question had to flee after them and calm them down by proving that he was far too substantial to be anything else but an ordinary specimen of English manhood! That was the last I ever heard of ghosts in Stanford Dingley, but they may haunt it yet.

Another instance of the want of sportsmanlike feeling in the olden days, was the shameful way in which the Lord of the Manor used to arrange a day in the season for the water of the river to be drawn off, so that his "friends" might enjoy the fun of "tickling for trout," and all day they would be employed in this ennobling enterprise. Needless to add after this that trout were not abundant in the stream.

"Stanford Dingley, in the hundred of Fair-cross, lies about nine miles to the north-east of Newbury, 11 west of Reading. The Manor of Stanford, in the hundred of Fair-cross, belonged to the Barons Somery; the Punchardons, who held it under them (Esch. Edward I. and Edward II.) became afterwards possessed of the fee, in which they were succeeded by the family of Stokes (Esch. Edward II.—Hen. VI.). About the year 1700 it belonged to the Hillesdons, from which it passed by purchase to its late owner, Mr. Barker. The present proprietor is Mrs. Cornish.

Rushdens, an ancient mansion in the parish, was for more than two centuries a seat of the Lyfords. The heiress of this family married Mr. Granger, who was possessed of it in 1759; it is now the property of Mr. Matthews.

In the Parish Church is a brass plate, with a memorial of Margaret, the wife of William Dyneley (esquire of the body to King Henry VIII.), who died in 1444. It seems not improbable that the Dyneleys succeeded the family of Stokes in the manor, and gave their name, since corrupted to Dingley, to the village; in all very ancient records it is called Stanford without any addition." (Top. and Hist. Account of Berkshire by Lysons, Daniel & Samuel).

In 1825 the income is given as £8 1s. 5d. a year. The old name in Domesday is Stanworde.

The Church is dedicated to St. Denis.