

Silchester Church :

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES.

By THE REV. H. T. ADAMS, Rector.

THIS ancient edifice dates from the Twelfth Century, and was no doubt built by John Bluet, who was given the two Manors by King John, who paid him a visit at the Clappers. The Bluets owned the Manors from A.D. 1093 to A.D. 1349.

It is peculiar because there is no Chancel Arch, and the Nave and Aisles are so short in the measurements.

Sizes : Length, 65ft. 5in. ; 22ft. East of the Screen. North Aisle, 30ft. 5in. by 7ft. 10in. South Aisle, 29ft. 5in. by 9ft. 4in.

There may have been a Twelfth Century Aisleless Nave and Chancel, an enlargement of an earlier one.

The North Aisle was added at the end of the Twelfth Century ; the South Aisle a little later than the Chancel.

The Church contains work done in the Twelfth Century, the late Twelfth Century, the Thirteenth Century, the Fourteenth Century, the late Fourteenth Century, the Fifteenth Century, the Sixteenth Century, and Modern.

THE FIRST PRINT is the Church from the South side, shewing the East end of the Farm House.

THE SECOND PRINT.

The North Door shewing the dog-tooth moulding, Early English Thirteenth Century.

THE THIRD PRINT.

This is a photograph of the North Door Lock and Key. The ironwork is very good. The key measures nine inches. It is unique as there is a touch hole, the barrel of the key being filled with powder and fired off, the obvious reason being to clean the key of dirt and dust. It may be the original key or a copy of the original.

THE FOURTH PRINT.

This illustrates the Fifteenth Century Font. The panels were painted by the Rev. Joyce, Rector of Stratfield Saye, and used to be behind the Altar and were removed to their present position when the Reredos took their place. The Reredos was carved and given in memory of Mrs. Newnham Davis by her daughter and son-in-law, Colonel and Mrs. Sealey. The carvings at the ends of the pews were designed and carved by the same Colonel and Mrs. Sealey, and represent the flowers and fruit mentioned in the Bible.

THE FIFTH PRINT.

This photograph illustrates many very interesting features in the beautiful Church. Let me make a beginning with the small window above the East window. This was filled up and not discovered until the restoration in 1872 : then the Rev. Hon. W. S. T. W. Fiennes had the white deal ceiling removed which covered the upper window and the timber. Mr. Fiennes himself helped in this work with a carpenter, Ambrose Ham, giving the glass for the window.

The East window was put up to the memory of Henry Newnham Davis by his widow : the subject is the Ascension of our Lord in the centre light. On either side the Holy Women at the Tomb telling them of the Resurrection. The window is by Clayton and Bell, 311, Regent Street, London. The timber for the restoration was given by the Duke of Wellington.

The first and second windows on the South side are thirteenth Century and show the early English painting : this was touched up at the restoration. The monument on the North side wall is to James Butler, fifth Viscount Ikkerin, 1712. The Rector, the Rev. Robert Betham, went to the Fleet Prison to see Dr. Dawson, the boy being left outside was murdered and his body thrown into the Fleet Ditch. The body was brought back and buried in a vault in the Chancel. Seven years after the Rev. Betham visited the prison again and was himself murdered and thrown into the Ditch. His body was brought back on the North side of the Church. There has been much discussion

about this story as to its authenticity. The following note is from Hearne : " Under Nov. 16, 1721, I am well informed that about 2 monthe agoe there was hanged for robbing upon the highway, a man at Tyburne who confessed among other things that he was the man who murdered Mr. Betham and afterwards threw him into the Fleet Ditch."

The second monument is to the Reverend John Paris, D.D., Rector, 1742.

Then we come to the Screen, a very beautiful piece of work. It is early Sixteenth Century. For some years it was taken out of the Church and stored either in the big tithe barn or in one of the sheds at the Manor Farm. It was replaced by one of Mr. Coles' curates somewhere between 1812 and 1864.

The Pulpit is hexagonal, of Seventeenth Century date. The Sound Board was given by James Hore, Gent, in 1639.

SIXTH PRINT.

Here we see the Pulpit, the Lectern, and the East window in the North Aisle. This aisle used to be called " Mortimer's Hole," so called because two steps led into it, and it was cold and damp, and the people living between the Manor House and Mortimer were allowed to sit there when they came to Church as their own Church was so far away.

The window contains the few pieces of the old glass. This, a friend of mine tells me, is very valuable. All the other stained glass has been hidden at some time and cannot be traced. The window is late Twelfth Century.

SEVENTH PRINT.

This print is a very good one of the Screen and Lectern which is Belgian and given to the Church by the late Lord Saye and Sele. The figures on the Screen are angels and pomegranates.

EIGHTH PRINT.

Here you see the Pulpit, Lectern and an old Chair given by Mr. Fiennes. No nails were used, wooden pegs being used. The prayer desk was made from wood from the old seats.

NINTH PRINT.

This is an excellent picture of the top of the Screen and the Monument to Dr. John Paris, Rector, 1742.

TENTH PRINT.

The Church from the North side. People from the farm used the Priest door up to the restoration. The tombstones leaning up against the East end are those to the Rivers family.

ELEVENTH PRINT.

Here we see the massive "trees," as Mr. Fiennes described these wooden supports for the Tower and the Gallery which entirely hid the West window. The players on the clarionets, other instruments and a small hand organ assisted the Choir with their music. The West window is Fourteenth Century. Mr. Fiennes soon had all the gallery taken down and freed the window.

TWELFTH PRINT.

In the foreground we see an early English Pillar. We also see the South Aisle, which was a Lady Chapel with Altar and a Piscina. The Pillar is Twelfth Century.

THIRTEENTH PRINT.

This is the East window in the Lady Chapel and is Fourteenth Century ; you also see the Early English Pillar.

FOURTEENTH PRINT.

Illustrations of the Easter Sepulchre and the two Thirteenth Century windows with the mural painting, early English.

FIFTEENTH PRINT.

Here we have a view looking from the Choir through the Screen towards the organ. You also get a glimpse of the low side window.

SIXTEENTH PRINT.

The Church from the South-West ; also the modern Porch added at the restoration. This is also a good view of the "Shingled Tower."

SEVENTEENTH PRINT.

The illustration here is of a Jacobean Altar Table.

EIGHTEENTH PRINT.

Here you see a recess in the East wall and one of the old Chairs given by Mr. Newnham Davis.

NINETEENTH PRINT.

This is the upper part of the East window in the South Aisle and the Fourteenth Century Corbels.

TWENTIETH PRINT.

A good picture of the early English Pillar, the South Door which is Thirteenth Century, and Hatchment to Viscountess Elinor Lady Blessington. Mr. Fiennes saw this lady's coffin when the vault was opened at the restoration ; he also saw a small lead coffin, the lead had perished, but he saw the skull and teeth of a young Lord Mountjoy. The Arms are Stewart quartering Boyle : it used to hang over the vault.

TWENTY-FIRST PRINT.

A Piscina in the South wall of the South Aisle. This has all the appearance of being the base of a Roman pillar turned upside down. There were two Roman Temples in the South-West part of the Churchyard.

TWENTY-SECOND PRINT.

The stone recumbent figure seen here is unidentified. It is in all probability that of Margaret De Cusancia (*nee* Bluet), who married a William De Cucansia who died before 1349, leaving her with one child : she inherited half the Silchester estate. There were traces of the paint in the curves of the figure. The effigy is certainly that of a widow wearing wimple and veil.

TWENTY-THIRD PRINT.

This fragment of panelled frieze which is built into the wall over the door of the South Porch was found by the Rev. Fiennes in the belfry. On it are painted the Arms of the Bluets, Cusancias and Barnard. It may have been a piece out of the shelf above the Altar in the South Aisle.

TWENTY-FOURTH PRINT.

Here we are looking through the East window in the North Aisle and at the only old glass that remains in the Church, the other stained glass being lost. It is said that the glass may have been taken out of the windows and buried at the time of Cromwell.

TWENTY-FIFTH PRINT.

This is a very interesting picture. Mr. Fiennes found these at the time of the restoration and had them placed in the position they now occupy.

The carved top part in the corner of the bowl of an early English Font. The shaft is part of a Roman pillar, as is the lower stonework.

TWENTY-SIXTH PRINT.

We look at the Church in this picture from the West-North-West. Before the restoration the way to the Belfry was inside the Church : now it is up a ladder and into the small door in the first roof.

The sparks from the barn fire in November, 1927, were flying over this Tower, but Providence watched over the sacred edifice.

TWENTY-SEVENTH PRINT.

These ancient stones used to form part of a rockery : they seem to be of very early times. There is a gargyle and the base of a pillar.

TWENTY-EIGHTH PRINT.

An illustration of a Corbel in the South Aisle.

TWENTY-NINTH PRINT.

This is the last picture of the Church. It shews the Church from the other side of the Duck Pond ; also part of the Roman wall.

The Sundial in the Churchyard is in perfect condition : it was put up in 1760, made by Master John Dicker. He was a well-known watch and clock maker : he and his son put up the dial by the Crown Inn.

The two carved stones on the Roman wall at the East side of the Church are Thirteenth Century and are said to be stones to the Bluet family. These stones were at one time probably inside the Church.

Inside the North door there is an old oak chest where the Parish records used to be kept. There are three keys : one for the Rector and one each for the Churchwardens. The lock is in working order. Carved on the chest is "W.G. I.R. 1724."