

## Crewkerne Church.

Mr. BUCKLE gave a description of the architecture of the Church, which he said ranked among the best in the county. At first sight it appeared to be a wholly Perpendicular

Church, but that was not the case. The mere fact of there being a central tower might be taken as a considerable argument in favour of there being, at any rate, some portion of an older Church remaining there; because in the 15th century central towers were not in favour. If the tower had been wholly rebuilt it would almost certainly have been put up at the west end.

The east wall of the south transept was of the 13th century, and in the transept might be seen a 13th century arch, in the eastern wall, with some fragments of paint on it. That arch clearly led into an eastern chapel. There could, therefore, be little doubt that in the 13th century a cruciform Church stood here, of about the same size as the present building, though without aisles. There was also much to indicate that the chancel wall was of early date. An early Decorated piscina remained in the chancel, and a Decorated piscina in the south transept. But probably the oldest stone in the Church was the bowl of the font,—a grand specimen of either Saxon or Norman work.

The Church contained examples of three distinct periods of Perpendicular work. To the earliest period belonged the whole of the chancel, and the greater part of the south transept. One of the most interesting features of the chancel was the position of the old vestry at the east end of the Church, now destroyed, but still clearly indicated on the outside of the building, and also inside by the two doorways which remained in the east wall on either side of the altar. Over these doors were two shields; the one supported by boars, the other by angels. The bearings had vanished from the shields, but what these were might perhaps be guessed from the supporters. Richard III used boars for supporters, but so also did the Courtenays, and from the paramount influence which this family possessed at Crewkerne it might be reasonably inferred that the northern shield originally bore their arms. As to the southern shield, it might be remarked that monas-

teries and other collegiate bodies, when they used supporters at all, frequently employed angels in that office; so that it was possible this shield bore the arms of S. Stephen of Caen, to whose monastery this Church was appropriated. But this was nothing more than a suggestion. Other instances of vestries at the east end of the chancel were to be found at Langport, Kingsbury, Ilminster, North Petherton, and Porlock.

In the south transept was an interesting figure of S. George attached to the central mullion of one of the east windows; a proof that here was a chapel dedicated to that saint. The door on the west side of this transept was modern, the old door having been in the centre of the south end.

The work of the second Perpendicular period included the whole of the nave, aisles, porch, and tower, together with some alterations to the south transept. Probably the works here classed together extended over a considerable period during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. The aisle windows were of enormous size, each six lights in width, and below each window was a thin window back, as at Yeovil; except in the case of the window opposite the south door, where a north door seemed to have been originally intended. (Major Sparks said that there had been until recently a north door there). The arches of the arcade were also of great width, so that there were but three in the whole length of the nave. Over these three arches five clerestory windows were somewhat awkwardly arranged. The west window deserved especial attention, from its beauty and the boldness of its design. Divided into three parts by two heavy mullions, it was treated almost as a combination of three distinct windows, and the upper part of the tracery above the heads of these three *fenestrellæ* being composed wholly of straight lines, and left very open, strongly accentuated the main lines of the design.

In the porch was a fan vault and a handsome stoup; and outside on the parapet a very interesting series of gargoyles were to be seen. True gargoyles they were not, for there

was no outlet for water through them; the water from the roofs of nave and aisles had from the first been brought down the walls in stack pipes, but no better name than gurgoyles was available for them. These over and around the porch were, as at Curry Rivel, welcoming the people with a hymn of praise, performed upon a great variety of musical instruments—harps, lyres, tambourines, and among others the bagpipes. The bagpipes appear also at Curry Rivel and at North Perrott, so that it seems likely that in the 15th and 16th century this instrument was well known in Somerset.

The west front was a fine composition, with turrets at the angles, and niches—unfortunately empty—on either side of the door and over the head of the great window. At the foot of the upper niche a wyvern formed the corbel for the figure, and suggested the inference that the occupant of the niche was the Virgin Mary, since she is usually represented with a dragon under her feet. The two large niches beside the west door were very curiously treated; out of their canopies issued demi-figures of a King and Bishop, popularly supposed to represent Henry VII and Cardinal Morton. But Henry VII it certainly could not be, for he shaved, while the figure in question had an unmistakable beard.

The curious shrine outside the south transept belonged to the same date as the nave and aisles. That this was intended for a shrine was clear from the remains of the niche and canopy work at the back over the position of the altar; but it was quite possible that it had subsequently been used for a pulpit. Its position was well chosen, commanding as it did the principal entrance to the churchyard from the market-place. In connection with this shrine it might be mentioned that a chantry to the blessed Virgin had been founded in this churchyard in 1316, and that a hermit was immured here in 1408, but there was no evidence to connect this shrine with either of these facts.

The tower presented several puzzling features. The lower

part was probably early work, though it was now completely cased in Perpendicular masonry. At three of the corners the buttresses were now within the Church; a sign that at the time they were built the church was without aisles, though the history of the change was difficult to unravel. The central space had once been covered with a fan vault similar to that in the porch, but now unfortunately destroyed. Corbels on the two eastern piers clearly marked the position of an old rood-loft, but a door high up over the western arch seemed to indicate the existence of another, one bay further west; if this was the true interpretation of that door there would seem to have been two rood-lofts in the Church at the same time. Over this door was a window, unsymmetrically placed, which formally looked out over the roof of the earlier nave. The upper part of the tower was treated in a rather unconventional manner; one tall window was carried through two stories, but was interrupted at mid-height by the string-course running across. A similar arrangement would be found at Shepton Beauchamp and at Hinton S. George; in each case the details were varied, but in none could the treatment be considered altogether satisfactory. In all three cases too, as well as at White Lackington, the turret was hexagonal, and placed so that no side was parallel to any wall of the Church. Probably these three towers were the work of one architect.

The last addition made to the Church before the reformation was the north transept, together with the series of chapels between it and the chancel. The old windows taken out of the chancel wall were refixed in the aisle wall, but all the new windows introduced at this period were of a totally different character to the other windows in the Church. They had very round or elliptical heads, filled with a poor class of tracery, which did not compare favourably with that usually found in Somerset; though another instance of a similar window might be seen in the neighbourhood, at the east end of the Ford Chapter-house. The Courtenay arms appeared

outside the transept in the spandrils of the east window. The fine west doorway of this transept was modern, and the base peeping through the floor just inside it belonged to a monument which had been moved to make room for the door.

Of furniture nothing remained of any interest, except the font already mentioned, but there were some interesting brasses and other monuments.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel BRAMBLE said that two rood-lofts were by no means uncommon.

The outside of the

### Old Grammar School

abutting on the churchyard was next inspected. It was founded by John de Combe in or about 1499, and forms a very interesting feature in the surroundings of Crewkerne Church. In its spacious and lofty hall the Society's meetings were held. The illustration forming the frontispiece to the present volume of the *Proceedings* is from a drawing in the Society's Museum at Taunton, and shows the old school as it used to be, before it was altered into a one-storey building, as at present.

The remains or marks outside the east wall of the chancel, beneath the great window, of the building which once stood there were also carefully examined. Mr. Buckle in his description speaks of this as 'the old vestry' (see p. 17), but may not this have been "The chantry of the blessed Virgin in the churchyard of Crukerne," referred to by Mr. Buckle, *ante* p. 19?<sup>3</sup>

Some of the Members also inspected a very interesting mediæval house, part probably of the 14th century and part Tudor, in the Market Square, occupied by Mr. Tompsett, wholesale grocer.

The company then took carriages and drove to

### Baselbury Church,

which was inspected.

<sup>2</sup> Full particulars of these are to be found either in Collinson or *The Book of the Axe*.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> *Somerset Chantries*. (Som. Rec. Soc., p. 176.)



Information as to Plucknett the second name of this parish will be found in Kirby's Quest (Som. Rec. Soc.), Collinson, Drogenford's Register (Som. Rec. Soc.), and Moule's *English Counties*.

The Rev. G. A. CALEY read a paper on "St. Wulfric," who was buried at Haselbury.

Saint Wulfric, known also as Wulfric and Ulric, who according to some was born at Compton Martin, according to others at Linton near Bristol, seems to have lived a wild life in his youth, and even after his taking orders. At Deverell in Wiltshire, where he was priest, he is said to have changed his life and to have become a recluse. Hence he removed to a small cell near the Church at Haselbury, where clad in chain mail he practised the austerities of a hermit. In this retirement he was visited by Henry I and Stephen, to whom he foretold that he should come to the throne. He died in 1154 at an advanced age. He was buried in his own cell, and his tomb was visited by pilgrims for many ages. The north aisle of the Church is called by Moule, the chapel of St. Wulfric.

Mr. BUCKLE had no doubt that the Church was built a few years after 1154. Another early piece of work was the two-light window over the chancel arch. The body of the Church, at present, was a very fine example of churchwardens' architecture, or rather, restoration.

The next stoppage was at

### *North Perrott Church.*

Mr. BUCKLE said that one of the most curious things about this Church was that the neighbouring one of South Perrott was a reproduction of it in every particular. Tradition said that these two Churches and that at Curry Rivel were built by three sisters—heiresses. So far as he had ascertained there appeared to be no history to bear out such a story. The early Church there and at South Perrott seem to have been exceedingly like one another, and when the 15th century

people at North Perrott desired to alter their Church and to bring it up to modern ideas, they did it precisely in the same way as the people of South Perrott—and although of two distinct dates, the result was that the two Churches were alike. The fabric had been very much altered during the present century; the windows had had their cusps cut out, and the beams had been cased. In the chancel was a coat of arms, in plaster, a copy of that carved in oak, but he could not make it out. Mr. Buckle drew attention to the paneling of the tower arches. On the west side of the porch they would find a gargoyle representing a bag-piper, similar to that at Crewkerne. The modern sculptured reredos is by Westmacott.

### Misterton

was then visited, and on the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. BLENCOE SPARKS, the company were entertained at tea, with delicious fruit, laid out on tables dotted about the lawn.

The flowers and the general surroundings of this pretty spot were greatly admired.

On returning to Crewkerne the party dined together at the George Hotel.

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## The Evening Meeting

was held in the old Grammar School at eight o'clock. The PRESIDENT was in the Chair and the room was full.

Bishop HOBHOUSE read a paper on "The Forests of Somerset and Mining Forest of Mendip," which is printed in Part II.

Major SPARKS read a paper on "Crewkerne Church," and on "The Parish of Crewkerne," of which full details are already published by Collinson and Pulman. He traced the history of Crewkerne from Saxon times, and showed that in those days the place was of considerable importance. He



gave a detailed description of the Church, very closely agreeing with the account previously given by Mr. Buckle, and said on the authority of the late Professor Willis that the niche outside the south-east corner of the south transept was a Friar's Pulpit. Major Sparks narrated the history of the Church down to the recent restoration, and gave the names of the incumbents from 1328.

In the discussion which followed,

Bishop HOBHOUSE enquired how the advowson passed from St. Stephen's of Caen to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester?

Rev. T. S. HOLMES said that Major Sparks had spoken of three rectors. Was Crewkerne a collegiate Church? He also should like information as to the archdeacon's aisle and the parvise. He could not reconcile the statement made that the old school was built on an old chantry in 1499 with Mr. Green's opinion, which was that the chantry was pulled down in 1553.

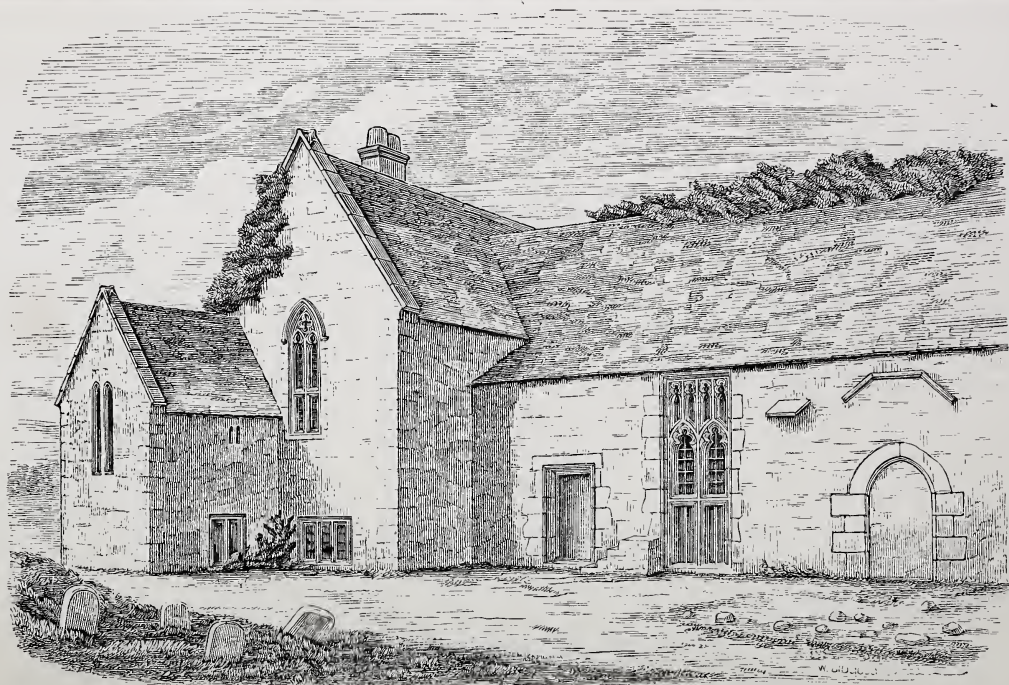
Since the meeting Dr. PENNY has kindly furnished the following particulars of

### *The Old Parsonage,*

commonly called "The Abbey," before its demolition, together with the illustration on the opposite page:—"It was at any rate the Clergy House for the three rectors of Crewkerne and the chantry chaplains; but when the Hussey family bought the living, great tithes and all, from the Dean and Chapter of Winchester, this building (mis-called in my boyhood 'the Old Abbey') also passed into their hands, and was finally demolished, to my own knowledge, in 1846."

A gentleman referred to an out-door pulpit at Oxford, which was very different from that at Crewkerne, as it was high up. He agreed with Mr. Buckle that it was probably an anchorite's cell, and that after his death it was turned into a shrine.

Mr. ELWORTHY said outside pulpits were by no means



THE OLD PARSONAGE, COMMONLY CALLED "THE ABBEY," CREWKERNE.  
Before its demolition in 1846.



THE THREE CHAPELRIES OF CREWKERNE.



uncommon. He recollected three especially—at St. Lo, in Normandy; at San Stefano, Bologna; and at the Cathedral in Perugia, but like the one before mentioned, at Magdalen College, Oxford, they were all at a considerable height above people's heads; moreover they were all corbelled out, so as to project entirely from the wall. They were also invariably approached by a doorway from behind, while the so called Friar's Pulpit here was completely recessed, was on the ground level and had no door at the back, nor any dwarf front, behind which a preacher usually stood. He did not think it was built for, or ever intended to be used as a pulpit, even if such had been the practice.

Major SPARKS said that Professor Willis told him that it was a Friar's Pulpit. He was a great authority.

Mr. CHISHOLM BATTEN said that the greatest possible respect should be paid to the opinion of Professor Willis, and if he pronounced it to be a pulpit, he thought they must submit to that authority.

Rev. Dr. PENNY spoke of the parvise over the south porch being without a staircase. He also stated that besides the parish Church, there were three other Churches which were affiliated as chapelries to the old mother Church of Crewkerne. These were Misterton, Seaborough, and Wayford—which are now become separate benefices.

The illustration opposite represents these Churches as each was at the date shown upon the face of it, when the sketch was made. Of the old Church of Misterton the restorer has not left one stone upon another, while those of Seaborough and Wayford have been so altered and “knocked about that scarce a soul now lives who could recognise them.”

The CHAIRMAN said that at South Petherton the parvise was also without a staircase.

The CHAIRMAN thanked Major Sparks for his paper.

Professor ALLEN read a paper (printed in Part II) proposing and advocating a “Photographic Survey.”

Dr. CRISPI supported the suggestion. After a brief discussion Dr. CRISPI proposed, Mr. SOMMERVILLE seconded, and it was resolved that the question should be seriously considered, and that it be referred to the Council of the Association.

Mr. W. A. E. USSHER read a paper communicated by Mr. H. B. Woodward, on "The Geology of Crewkerne," which is printed in Part II.

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