

Wednesday : Excursion.

Muchelney Abbey

WAS the first place visited, where the remains of the ancient structure were examined under the guidance and direction of MR. PARKER.

Of Muchelney Abbey there are considerable remains, consisting chiefly of the Abbot's House, with a small portion of the cloister, which joined on to it. The Abbey Church is said to have been entirely destroyed, and the present Church is understood by Mr Freeman, apparently with good reason, to be only the parish Church, which was situated immediately - outside of the Abbey gates, according to the usual custom. The Church is a good plain parish Church of the fifteenth century, of the usual character of the district. Immediately opposite to it is the old Vicarage House of the same age as the Church, and a good example of a small plain gentleman's house of the latter part of the fifteenth century, unusually perfect ; scarcely any alteration has been made in it excepting the inserting a floor in the Hall, which may easily be removed. The doorway belongs to a previous house about a century older than the present one, and has been used again.

The old wooden door, with its ironwork, has been preserved; but belongs to the same age as the present house, not to that of the doorway.

The cloister was then examined, which Mr. Parker observed must have been a very fine one, with a stone vault of fan tracery, and the walls paneled; a small portion of it only remains, with a low room over it, probably part of the library, or *scriptorium*. It is not large enough or lofty enough for the dormitory, which had commonly a roof like a hall, with a passage down the centre and cells on each side; there would not have been space for this over the cloister. The back wall of this building is richly paneled, which is very uncommon; it seems to have formed one side of the Abbot's court. The Abbot's house is a very fine example of a wealthy gentleman's house of the time of Henry VII. or VIII., and nearly perfect, though only used as a farm-house. The Abbot's chamber on the first floor is perfect, but divided into two parts by a wooden partition, it has a good wide stone staircase up to it, and it retains the wainscot and settle of the time of Henry VIII., with the linen panel, and a good crest of open-work. There is also an old barn, and there are many fragments of earlier work with a lancet window.

From hence the party proceeded to

Kingbury Episcopi,

the beautiful Church of which is well known as one of the finest of the Churches of the Somersetshire types of the Perpendicular style, with their magnificent towers, and has a fine rood loft and screen.

Considerable fragments of the Vicarage House of the time of Henry VII. have been built up in the form of

a modern house, rather ingeniously, to give the appearance of being in their original place.

The next place visited was

Martock,

abounding in excellent specimens of the style of domestic architecture of comparatively recent date, so characteristic of the towns and villages around the quarries of Ham Hill. Here also is another very fine Church and Tower of the same style, and has been carefully restored.

At Martock the

Old Manor House

of the latter part of the fourteenth century remains nearly perfect, though divided into small tenements. The principal feature is of course the hall. It is a good example of an ordinary gentleman's hall of the time of Richard II. or the end of Edward III., and has the windows perfect, with late Decorated tracery, and the two seats in the sill of each, which always distinguish a hall window from a church or chapel window. The kitchen also remains perfect, and forms one side of the servants' court at the back of the hall. The music gallery and screen have been plastered over and modernised, the buttery and pantry, with the handsome guest chamber over them, are turned into a cottage and divided by wooden partitions. There are no remains of the stairs, and the lord's apartments at the upper end of the hall are divided into small modern tenements and spoiled. In the hall there are two handsomely carved stone brackets, either for lights to be placed on, or merely for some ornamental purpose. It is altogether one of the most perfect small manor houses of that period that we have remaining.

From here the company proceeded to

South Petherton.

South Petherton Church is another fine Perpendicular Church, which has recently been restored.

The house called "King Ina's Palace," is a very neat and beautiful example of a manor house of the times of Henry VII. and VIII., the walls are perfect, and the the double long window is one of the most beautiful things of the kind that we have anywhere remaining. It does not belong to the hall, but to a dining-room, with a drawing-room over it, marking the period when the great change in the habits of the people was taking place, when the hall was going out of use, and a separate dining-room was required. These two rooms form a separate wing of the house, and are brought out considerably in advance of the hall, which forms the centre of the house; this wing is on the same side as the kitchen and offices, on the same end of the hall; but the chambers at the upper end are comparatively insignificant, so that the old mediæval arrangement was almost abandoned, although the hall was still retained, and has the old fireplace and open turret wing. The woodwork is all in a bad state of repair, but the walls are sound, and the arrangement of the house has scarcely been altered at all. It is a very valuable example, and ought to be carefully preserved.

Passing through Shepton Beauchamp the company arrived at

Barrington Court.

Barrington Court is a very fine and rich example of a nobleman's house of the latest Tudor or early Elizabethan style,—a large quadrangular mass, with projecting wings, the walls perfect, with their numerous turrets, small gables, twisted chimneys and pinnacles, and finials, all of stone,

boldly and finely carved, producing a marvellously fine and picturesque effect, and one of the most beautiful looking houses that we have any where. The windows are very numerous, square headed, with mullions and transoms. The interior is unfortunately entirely modernized and spoiled, a portion of it is of the time of James I., with wainscot and fireplaces of that period, but nothing earlier. At the top of the house is one of the long galleries, usual at the period, which seems to have extended quite round the house, but is entirely spoiled.

Barrington Church is another example of the older Somersetshire cruciform type, with central octagonal tower; and was pronounced by Mr. Parker to be a genuine little Church of the time of King Henry III.

The last point of attraction for the day's excursion was Curry Rivel Church, in which Mr. Munckton read a short paper, and Mr. Parker appended a few remarks. The magnificent perpendicular transomed windows of this Church, with their pierced quatrefoils at the spandrils, the very beautiful early English work of window and tomb in the chantry chapel, the remains of the great rood screen, so richly carved, and the oak stalls and benches surmounted with finials, were justly admired.

A Conversation

In the Town Hall, in the evening, brought the proceedings of the day to a close, at which all the Members of the Society present were sumptuously entertained by the Local Committee and the Members residing near Langport.

A very varied and extensive collection of works of art, specimens of natural history, and objects of antiquarian interest had been brought together on the occasion.

Short addresses were delivered, and a cordial vote of thanks presented to the inhabitants of Langport for the cordial and hospitable reception with which they had favoured the Society.