

Third Day's Proceedings.

On Thursday, the weather was again very beautiful and the members left Weston-super-Mare at 9.30 a.m. for

Worle Church,

where the party was met by the Vicar, the Rev. A. C. Harman.

The Rev. E. H. BATES described the Church. He said:—

“To the traveller on the upper road from Weston to Worle, the church presents a pleasing outline with its spire crowned tower, carved parapet over the north aisle, and external turret at the north-east corner. The distinctly marked break in the masonry of aisle and tower denotes two different periods of construction, and as the former is fifteenth century work, the tower is doubtless much older. There are, however, no architectural features by which its exact age can be determined. The entrance doorway on the south side is of a plain Norman type, perhaps of the same date as the font, which is assigned by Mr. Pridham to the period 1135—1154. A small window in the east wall of the porch may also belong to the original building. The arcade between the nave and aisle and the windows are all XV Century work.

“The fittings are of considerable interest. Besides the font, there is a stone pulpit which has been moved from some other part of the church, as immediately behind it is a piscina. The altar to which this was appurtenant may have had some connection with the empty recess in the wall, probably intended for the recumbent effigy of some parishioner.

“In the wall opposite to the pulpit there is a squint, and close at hand the door leading to the staircase in the external turret by which access was gained to the vanished rood-loft.

“The sedilia, with their misereres, on the north side of the chancel, are part of the original furniture. On the misereres are carved, two heads under one head, a curly-tailed dragon,

vine leaf and bunch of grapes, and on the easternmost the letter P and the monogram RS. This I venture to read as Prior Richard Spryng, who occupied that post at Woodspring, 1498—1525. He was also Vicar of Worle 1499—1516.

“There are two stone sedilia on the south side of the presbytery, with a piscina sunk in the sill of the window, and a small aumbry in its eastern jamb. There are no monuments of any interest. The register dates from 1598, and is complete throughout the period of the Civil War. In 1643 the Vicar being in some perturbation of mind, made the entries on a wrong page, and made a marginal note to that effect. The churchwardens’ accounts reach back to 1699, and contain a reference to the great gale of 1703.”

An interesting drive round the east end of Worle Hill, brought the party to

Worspring Priory,

which was fully described by the Rev. F. W. WEAVER, F.S.A., and Mr. F. BLIGH BOND, F.R.I.B.A.

Mr. Weaver’s remarks are incorporated in his paper on “Worspring Priory,” in Part II. of this Volume. Mr. Bond conducted the party round the most interesting parts of the buildings, and his descriptions have been brought together in the following notes, which he has recently written and revised:—

“The original chantry was dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket, and was founded within forty years of the martyr’s death. It stood upon the Courtenay property at Worspring, at a spot known as Five Elms, some distance from the later building, where a witness in 1835 remembered having seen the remains of the building.

“A Norman capital was dug up at a distance of some three hundred yards from the Priory, some years ago.

“The Priory, founded in 1210 by William Courtenay, son of Robert, the founder of the chantry, is generally said to have

had a triple dedication to the Holy Trinity, the B.V. Mary, and St. Thomas of Canterbury. It was filled with Augustinian canons from Dodelyng, or Dodelinch, a locality which is still a matter of speculation ; and these were placed in connection with those of Bristol. (The latter came from Wigmore.)

“The Priory is approached through a modern enclosure, entered by a gateway, the jambs of which are surmounted by two shields, one on either side, which Mr. Allen Bartlett says were brought from a spot in the fields lying in a line between the Priory and a landing-place on the coast, whither it seems likely they may have been removed at a time when the free-stone of the Priory was being used for building material locally.

“The escutcheon on the right is charged with the five wounds of our Lord, the heart at the centre. That on the left displays the arms of Dodington—a chevron between three bugle horns stringed—with a crescent for difference.

“The Priory is entered by a great gate and wicket, leading to the outer court.

“The gateway arch is of XIV Century character, with good dripmould. The imposts are continuous, as is general in local Decorated work (*vide* tower arch at Bleadon, chantry arch at S. Brent, etc., etc.).

“The Priory church now confronts us, its west wall facing the entrance. This wall exhibits the outline of a large Perpendicular window, with niches for statues, three in number, one on either side and one above—suggestive of the alleged triple dedication.

“The niche on the north side without doubt contained the figure of St. Thomas of Canterbury ; the others are quite conjectural. Mr. Bartlett thought that the southern niche probably held a figure of St. Augustine, but the country people say it was St. Kew, though this seems a guess. Existing remains would seem to disprove the theory advanced by another writer, that the figures of the Virgin and Child filled the niche.

“The central tabernacle over the window contained the representation of the Holy Trinity as at Yatton, and at East Brent. The angles of the west front are flanked by octagonal turrets, well proportioned, and with good pierced parapets.

“Built against the foot of the north turret is a range of comparatively modern domestic buildings, the date over the doorway being 1709. They probably occupy the site of the ancient pilgrims’ almonry or hospitium. There was an ancient building of two floors here adjoining the church, traces of which will be seen internally in the shape of a XV Century mantelpiece, and a small turret stair, now blocked up, and cut into by a passage—which stair may have given access, not only to these rooms, but to a gallery at the west end of the nave of the church. The kitchen chimney here is also worthy of note.

“Passing through the outer court, and a doorway at the south-west angle of the nave, we enter the inner court, or monastic enclosure.

“The masonry of the containing walls of this court is more ancient than that of the nave, and some of the rough lias work seen here may have belonged to the earliest Priory, though no detail of that date can be pointed out.

“A weather-mould on the south wall of the nave, above a small light of more recent insertion, shews where the gable of a building over the western arm of the cloister rested against the church. From the complete disappearance of this building it has been conjectured that it was probably of wood construction, or largely so. It was approached by the spiral stair in the turret at the southern extremity, of which the XIV Century doorway is still visible.

“The character of the moulded head and drip of this doorway is good and noteworthy.

“Against the southern side of this inner court, or quadrangle, would have abutted the conventual offices, or domestic buildings, which according to rule would occupy this position. Here would be found in all probability the refectory, kitchen,

infirmary, canons' parlour, novices' rooms, visitors' rooms, library, scriptorium, with other apartments necessary to the convenience of the canons. Within the past hundred years a range of buildings stood on this site, which gave shelter to forty cattle.

“The east wall of the quadrangle is also of rough lias, and this, as well as the others to the south and west, were doubtless stuccoed, forming as they did the inner walls of the cloister. On the further side of the east wall lay probably the chapter room and, beyond this again, the prior's lodging. Nothing remains but the handsome doorway, which led to the chapter room, and the space between this and the church—now filled up with more modern masonry—would in the old days have been open, forming a ‘slype’ or passage alongside the choir, giving access to the prior's rooms, etc. Over the chapter room, and occupying almost the entire length of the east side of the cloister, Mr. Bartlett would place the dormitory, the building over the west cloister being reserved for carols.

“Proceeding through the site of the former chapter room, it will be seen that all is cleared away, though the rough mounds underfoot bespeak a large accumulation of old building material, and might yield, if examined, a good deal of valuable information.

“To the south-east lies the large and well-proportioned building, commonly called the ‘refectory,’ but the nature of which does not give colour to that supposition.

“It is of early XV Century date, the detail of the windows on the north side being particularly good. It is too large for a refectory for so small a community, even considering visitors, and has moreover no fireplace such as we might expect to find in a refectory.

“It used to be known locally as the Prior's, or Friars', Hall, and may be regarded as having been a meeting hall for secular uses, a court-room in fact, like the great court-room at Fountain's Abbey. Convents held manorial courts, and there

would be gatherings of tenantry to be accommodated. In this connection the position of the building must be also taken into account. There is however, an alternative theory which must be considered—namely, that this building was the hospital or infirmary for the district over which the canons (who were doctors) exercised their ministrations.

“The prior’s lodgings lay to the north of this hall, between it and the choir of the church.

“The prior’s state entrance was on this side, and is now blocked up. Flanking this wall may also be noticed a door-head indicative of a passage from the conventual buildings to the hall and prior’s lodging.

“The interior of the hall will repay a careful examination. In addition to the two windows on the north, there are also one on the west and another on the south, both exhibiting the same refined detail. An old water-colour sketch, preserved in Bristol, shows a small traceried window in the east gable, but this wall has been sadly pulled about for farm purposes, and has lost all ancient features.

“In an old print reproduced from Maton’s ‘Western Counties,’ an entrance doorway is shown near the south-east angle, in the south wall. This was obviously for the use of persons attending the hall, other than the inmates of the monastery.

“At the south-west angle of the hall, externally, is the remnant of a spiral staircase leading either to a lantern, or to buildings now destroyed, and formerly part of the monastic series.

“The Priory church, as at present standing, consists of a Perpendicular nave, already mentioned, a central tower, north aisle or chantry chapel (embodying a north transept), and shallow south transept. The choir has disappeared.

“The church seems to have been in process of rebuilding when the Dissolution supervened, and all we can see externally is Perpendicular.

“The tower is the leading feature, and is earlier and better

in composition and detail than the rest. It is built upon the core of an older tower, most likely the original XIII Century construction, and a small portion of the work of this date is still said to be visible in the interior, in the form of a massive circular pier in the north-east angle above the arch on the north side, where the XV Century masonry is broken away. The building of the nave and north aisle must have followed later upon that of the tower, and from its inferior design may be regarded as XVI Century work. It has been conjectured that the choir, as planned by the later architect, had never been completed, but that the older choir may have been in part demolished, and the work of rebuilding commenced. Against this theory must be set the fact that in the course of Mr. Bartlett's excavations of the choir footings, traces of a conflagration were observed, from which it may be inferred that the new choir had been erected, and destroyed by fire, since much of the detail unearthed was of late date. There are indications at the south-west corner (*i.e.* south-east angle of the tower) of a continuance of the design of the new work. It consists of the greater part of the sill of the westernmost window of the choir and the jamb above it.

“The splays, hollows, and mouldings are similar to those in the window next it. Also, the string-course below the nave windows is carried along beneath the broken sill. From this we may infer either that the intention had been to remodel the choir in the latest Woodspring taste, or to reface the old work, but the work seems to have been interrupted by the Dissolution.

“The casings constructed by the ‘Perpendicular’ architect to the arches beneath the tower are of Caen stone, and the mouldings are fine, bold, and somewhat unusual in their grouping. The groining is especially worthy of note, in view of the fact that it was restored in 1826 by the then lord of the manor. In the shallow recess, or quasi-transept, to the south side we have an uncommon feature. This recess contained an

altar, whose desecrated tabernacle-work is still in evidence on the east wall.

“The turret-staircase, approached from the west end of this recess, does not bond with the south-west pillar, and on ascending the stair the same peculiarity is noticeable, but higher up all is united both in design and construction. The fact is that the Woodspring architect did not wish to destroy the massive substructure of the old tower, the height of which is not known. It is not clear that any part of it was pulled down. Both on the north and south sides a lean-to roof was added. That on the south side, covering the shallow transept-chapel, will be seen on mounting the stairs and emerging on the narrow parapet-wall.

“There remains the north aisle or chantry to be described. The eastern or gable wall has been much modernized, but there remain externally some traces of a three-light gable window.

“On the north are three windows corresponding in style with the later work on the south side of the church, and the diagonally-set buttress at the angle shews a similar resemblance.

“The intermediate buttresses are of late character, with flattish hollows. The chantry terminated at the west at a point nine or ten feet short of the length of the nave. The north windows have been all walled up at the bottom, and a floor inserted. The lower part is now a cider cellar. Both this part of the church and the nave, are cut up into several rooms, and the ancient roofs have altogether disappeared.

“From within the north chantry may be seen the northern side of the arch to the tower. Here is an interesting comparison to be noted in the junction of two very distinct styles of workmanship—the mouldings to the vaulting shafts of the chantry being much later and weaker in profile than those of the tower, and all on a very much smaller scale.

“Here, at the east, was the shrine or altar, of St. Thomas of Canterbury—which seems to have been intentionally violated or devastated—so completely are its remains effaced. Its form

and decorations cannot well be traced, but there are the remains of a carved piscina attached to the north-east pier of the tower-arch on this side. Rutter says that the two shields at the farm entrance came from this chapel, being corbels on the tower-arch, but this is doubtful.

“The large circular stair is an intrusion. From the bedrooms above, to which it now gives access, may be seen the arch-heads of the nave arcade.

“The last building of interest to which attention may be directed is the barn, which is of XIV Century work. The masonry presents various details of interest, among others a shield bearing the three swords which are the arms of Paulet.

“Readers are referred to the previous mention of Worspring Priory in vols. iv and xxxi of the *Som. Arch. Soc. Proc.* ; also to the *Visitors' Handbook to Weston-super-Mare*, by the Rev. W. Jackson, F.S.A. To both these publications the writer is indebted for material used in the present compilation.”

The Rev. F. W. Weaver and Mr. Bligh Bond having been thanked for their descriptions, and also Mr. Garrett, the tenant of the Priory, for granting permission to the members to inspect the interior of the buildings, the party proceeded to Banwell, *viâ* Castle Batch (an earthwork mentioned by Colonel Bramble in his presidential address).

Luncheon at Banwell.

Luncheon was served at the Ship Hotel, after which the DEAN OF WELLS, thanked COLONEL BRAMBLE for his kindness in presiding at the meetings. The resolution having been seconded by the Rev. F. W. WEAVER, the PRESIDENT, briefly replied, and the resolution was heartily carried, amidst much applause.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER, proposed votes of thanks to all those who had helped to make the meeting a success. First he would mention the Local Secretary, Mr. Ernest E. Baker,



Photographed in 1890 by Dr. F. J. Allen.

THE TITHE BARN, WORSPRING PRIORY, SOMERSET.

F.S.A., and the members of the Axbridge Branch of the Society who had entertained them to such an excellent conversation at Weston Museum on the previous evening. He must also mention Mr. F. Bligh Bond, Mr. W. L. Radford, Mr. W. H. Palmer, Mr. H. N. Davies, and Mr. M. P. Porch, for their papers on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings; Colonel Bramble, Mr. Bligh Bond, Dr. F. J. Allen, the Rev. C. S. Taylor, the Rev. E. H. Bates, the Rev. F. S. P. Seale, and the Rev. Preb. G. E. Smith, for describing churches and other buildings; Mr. H. St. G. Gray, for his papers on Worlebury Camp and Brent Knoll Camp; and to others who had assisted in various ways. Colonel Bramble and Preb. and Mrs. Smith, had already been thanked for their kind hospitality, but he believed that many of the members were going to avail themselves of Mrs. Burr's kind invitation to tea that afternoon.

The remarks of Mr. Weaver were heartily endorsed by the members, as also was a vote of thanks accorded to Mr. Weaver and Mr. Gray for the manner in which they had carried out the details of another successful series of excursions.

Banwell Church.

A most interesting description of the history of the Church and the parish was given by the Rev. C. S. TAYLOR, F.S.A., from whom the visitors received a hearty welcome. Mr. Taylor's remarks have been amplified, and now form a separate paper which is published in Part II of this volume, with illustrations.

Mr. Taylor having been thanked for his able account of Banwell, the tower of the church was described by Dr. ALLEN in the churchyard. He said :—

“I agree with Mr. Taylor in attributing an early date to this tower. The mouldings and tracery are of a very graceful type, not far removed from the Decorated style, and the tower may have been built before the year 1400. The lower part of the tower at Winscombe may be contemporary, but its top

seems to be later. These towers are nearly related to that at Shepton Mallet, which has earlier details than either. The Shepton tower has the buttresses very prominent, to bear the stress of the spire (unfinished); but here at Banwell the buttresses are very flat, although (as Mr. Taylor tells us) a spire was evidently intended, for the squinches may be seen within the tower at the top.

"The stair-turret is in the usual position, on one side, *near* a corner but not *at* it. Here, and in most West Mendip towers, the stair cuts out one of the windows. In some of the East Mendip towers the three windows are retained, but narrowed so as to fit the contracted space.

"[I have measured some of our towers, but not this one: Mr. Brereton has measured it, and tells me that it is one of the seven highest parish church towers in the county, its height being over one hundred feet to the top of the parapet. The six other highest towers to which Mr. Brereton refers are, I believe, the two at Taunton, St. John the Baptist's at Glastonbury, St. Cuthbert's at Wells, Chewton, and the Temple tower at Bristol]."

After leaving Banwell Church, the exterior of Banwell Abbey was viewed, by kind permission of Mr. E. R. Bevan. "The Abbey" was mentioned by Mr. Taylor in his address.

The greater portion of the party next visited the so-called "Roman Landmark" on Banwell Hill, under the guidance of the Rev. C. S. Taylor. His remarks on the subject have been incorporated in his paper on "Banwell" in Part II.

Banwell Bone Cavern.

From the "Roman Landmark," a large part of the members walked one-and-half miles along the crest of Banwell Hill *viâ* the Avenue of Stones and the Law Monument to the Cavern. Others walked down the hill to Banwell, and drove as far as Knightcott (walking a quarter-of-a-mile up to the cavern).

The cavern, which was visited by permission of Mrs. Law, was illuminated by candles for the Society's visit. After it had been explored, short descriptions of its chief features of interest were given by Messrs. H. N. Davies, F.G.S., and H. St. G. Gray.

MR. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, in dealing with the discovery of the remains of extinct mammalia in this neighbourhood, said that we owed the exploration of the Caverns of Banwell, Sandford Hill, Bleadon, Goat's Hole in Burrington Combe, and Uphill, to the joint labours of the Rev. D. Williams and Mr. William Beard. The collections of bones of extinct animals made by both these gentlemen were purchased many years ago for the Archæological Society by special subscriptions. Their labours extended from 1821 to 1860. If Taunton Castle Museum was famed for one collection more than another it was probably its vast collection of the extinct mammalia of the Somersetshire caves. Prof. Boyd Dawkins informed us long ago that the fauna of the Mendips was 'characterized by the great number of lions and by a few fragments of the glutton.' The lion of Pleistocene age in Somerset was a true lion differing in no respect, except in its large size, from those now living in Asia and Africa. Remains of the lion had not been found at Banwell, but two bones of the wild cat, an allied species, were found there.

The perfect condition of the thousands of bones still existing in the cave and outside it (in Museums) testify to the fact that the bone-destroying hyæna did not use Banwell cave as a den. Hyæna remains had been found plentifully, however, in the neighbouring caves of Sandford Hill and Hutton.

The Banwell Cavern was filled with thousands of bones of *Bison priscus*, horse, and reindeer (*Cervus tarandus*), taken out of the red silt which originally filled the cavern to the roof. This accumulation of bones was introduced by water through a vertical fissure which opened on the surface. Nearly perfect skulls of the bear and wolf had been found here. *Ursus*

spelæus, the great cave bear, was represented at Banwell by skulls, vertebræ, and immense limb-bones. In addition, the marten and otter and the Arctic and common foxes had been discovered.

Mr. H. N. DAVIES has kindly sent the following abstract of his address on the Geology of the Banwell Caves :

“ These caves, like those of Cheddar, Wookey and Burrington, are excavated in the carboniferous limestone rocks which flank the old red sandstone core of the Mendip plateau on the north and west. But unlike the other caves of the neighbourhood which open into gorges, the entrance to the Banwell bone caves is on or near the summit of the hill. A descent of twenty feet leads to the first cavern ; a second opens into this on the same level ; and a third is reached by another descent of nearly thirty feet. If the animal remains which filled these caves were washed in by flood-waters, which is probable, as they were cemented together by a clayey deposit, we have to postulate a level country and the subsequent wash-out of the new red marls and liassic beds, which filled up the broad valleys now opening out towards the Bristol Channel. Patches of these lost strata are still to be found here and there to illustrate the truth of these remarks. Caverns in limestone rocks were once subterranean waterways, and some even yet retain the stream which is largely responsible for their existence. The river Axe still flows through Wookey Hole, and Poole’s Cavern, Buxton, Derbyshire, has its original stream rushing over the rocky bed of a good portion of its length.

“ The solvent action of water which has carbon-dioxide dissolved in it is well known. As the carboniferous limestone strata belong to one of the most ancient series of stratified rocks, the waters which descend through joints, fissures, and porous beds have had ample time in which to accomplish the task of eating out for themselves these underground channels. The extent of this destructive action can best be realised by considering the quantity of lime brought out in solution by

the local springs. Twenty grains to the gallon is a fair average. Say the Weston reservoirs receive 300,000 gallons daily, then this represents 6,000,000 grains, or 857lbs., or nearly 8cwts. of the bicarbonate of lime in solution; and this would amount to 146 tons brought out in one year from the limestone beds through which these streams have excavated their channels. Besides the solvent action of water, we must also take into account its power of mechanical erosion. Rushing waters loaded with sand grind their channels wider and deeper. Uniting the two processes, and granted a long period of uninterrupted action, and the formation of subterranean waterways, even on such a gigantic scale as the mammoth cave of Kentucky, ceases to cause surprise, although their magnitude may arouse our admiration and astonishment."

The party rejoined the carriages at Knightcott, and a few miles drive brought them to Uphill Vicarage, where, through the hospitality of the Rev. A. J. and Mrs. Burr, afternoon tea was partaken of in their beautiful garden. Subsequently a hearty acknowledgment was made on behalf of the guests, and the members left for Weston-super-Mare, from whence they dispersed to their homes, after a most successful and enjoyable series of excursions, the weather being all that could be desired.