

Second Day's Proceedings.

Wednesday was devoted to an excursion to the churches on the moors lying to the east of Taunton, including the parishes of Ruishton, Creech St. Michael, North Curry, Stoke St. Gregory, and Thornfalcon. A start was made punctually at 9.30 in brakes from Castle Green, the party numbering about a hundred.

Ruishton Church.

The first place visited was Ruishton, where the church was inspected. Mr. BUCKLE, before going inside, drew attention to the charming little tower. They would notice that its general character was similar to a great many round about

that part, and particularly it was like St. James's, Taunton, and Bishop's Lydeard, only on a smaller scale, and in a different coloured stone. Ruishton tower was built of blue lias, whereas the Taunton towers were built of red sandstone in each case, with Ham stone dressings. The smallness of the tower, combined with such magnificent and effective richness, had a striking effect. It was a remarkable tower in another way, because they happened to know its date. In Mr. Weaver's book on Wills they found money left for its building in 1530 and 1533. Considering the lateness of the date, the building was of an exceedingly pure style, there being nothing to suggest that it was absolutely at the end of the Perpendicular period. According to tradition, the tower was never finished, and this seemed likely to be true. At any rate, the parapet and pinnacles were now missing, and if they were ever put up, they must have been taken down. In looking at the tower it would be seen that the intention of the builder was to have a parapet and pinnacles. There was a fragment of a cross in the churchyard, and at the corner of the church was a stone on the coign carved with the figure of a priest in the act of benediction. Proceeding inside the building, Mr. Buckle pointed out the fragment of a Norman doorway. The chapel and probably also the walls of the chancel were of the early English period, probably 12th century. The east window of the chapel was very charming, with delicate tracery. It was a form of geometrical window which was met with here and there round about Somerset, the most noteworthy being that at Middlezoy, which they visited last year. All the rest of the church was, as usual, Perpendicular. They would notice how curiously the church was planned, the chancel being completely out of line with the nave, with a little window near the pulpit looking from the nave into the chancel, and a doorway leading from the chancel into the chapel. The arcade between the chapel and the nave was a pretty piece of work. The font was a remarkable example, richly carved all over, and stand-

ing upon five legs. There were some fragments of old wood carving in the present reredos, which probably came from the screen, as there clearly was a rood screen there. On the north was a large staircase, with a pretty window in it. In front of the reredos was a beautiful picture, of which he would be glad to hear the history.

Prebendary ASHKWITH said the tradition was that in the last century the picture was presented to the church by a member of Mr. Murray Anderdon's family, of Henlade, but no record could be found of it. Probably about that time a great many Flemish pictures came to England and were presented to churches, as this one was said to have been.

The Rev. H. H. BATES kindly sends the following note: "Among the fragments of coloured glass in the windows is a representation of a chalice with yellow stain, interesting in that the foot of the chalice has small toes at each projecting angle. This ornamentation was in fashion from 1490 to 1510, or thereabouts."

Creech St. Michael Church.

The party were next driven to Creech St. Michael, and proceeding to the church they were received by the Vicar, the Rev. James Bownes. Mr. BUCKLE, in describing the features of the building, said that at first glance they would be inclined to say that this was a thoroughly Perpendicular church, with the exception of the arches they came in by; but the contrary was the fact. Almost the entire walls of the church were of the 12th century, and the large nave was of that date. The outer arch of the porch was in the characteristic Somerset style, which was called "Early Somerset." They would notice in the tower that two of the arches were Early English, but that looking into the aisle towards the west was a Perpendicular arch, which was inserted when the aisle was added. The upper part of the early tower remained,



NORTH CURRY CHURCH, INTERIOR.

but above that a Perpendicular belfry had been added, as was often the case. Though the old walls remained, with the exception of the arches and the south porch, there was nothing left of the features of the early church. All the windows had been inserted at later periods. The most remarkable feature of the chapel on the north was a gallery in the thickness of the wall which formed the approach to the rood loft, through a doorway which was now blocked. There was a great deal that was very rich about the Perpendicular work, and there were two nice niches on the pillars besides some elaborate work leading into the transept. The windows in the transept were curious, the lower ones having quaint cusping. The roof was very rich and had elaborate carvings. A piece of the rood screen remained, which had been cut off just above the lower panels. There were some fragments about the chancel of other old wood work, and there were a few bench ends. A curious desk was made out of a variety of these fragments, which bore the date 1634. The church contained a monument in the north chapel of the Cuff family. Outside, over the west window, was a figure of the Trinity. The stocks were still standing in the churchyard under one of the two fine old yew trees.

The Rev. J. BOWNES exhibited the communion plate and the registers, the earliest date of the latter being 1641. During a discussion on the origin of the name of the parish, Prebendary ASKWITH expressed the opinion that it was derived from "creek."

North Curry Church.

The next church visited was that at North Curry, which is considered to be one of the finest edifices of its kind in the county. Mr. BUCKLE, in describing its features, first of all called attention to its remarkably fine octagonal tower. There were, he said, a good many octagonal towers scattered about

Somerset, such as at Stoke St. Gregory, which they would visit that afternoon, South Petherton, Bishop's Hull, and Pitminster. But in almost every case they were the work of the latter part of the 12th century, very early in the Early English style. As a rule they found that the tower was raised afterwards in the Perpendicular period, and another storey put on. But except for that one at North Curry, he did not think there was any example in the county of a tower of that form which was begun so late as that apparently was. There appeared to be nothing earlier in that church than 1300. The principal part of the tower, the belfry storey and the octagon appeared to be later than that, but the piers and arches remaining in the centre of the church under the tower, and the transepts were of the beginning of the Decorated period. The elaborate moulding of the pillars with the capitals, and then the internal arches of the two windows in the transepts—all that work was also of this date. Thus, they had an example of a cruciform church, with central octagonal tower, founded at this comparatively late date. The church then built was without aisles, and the chancel and nave were of the same large size as at present. He called attention to the very curious arrangement of the tower piers; there were two elaborately moulded piers on the east side, whereas on the west side there were comparatively plain ones, and, in both cases, there were stone seats carried round the base, an unusual feature to find in a building which was only a parish church. In reference to that, he might remark that North Curry church was often called "the cathedral of the moors," on account of its grandeur, and of the way in which it overlooked the moor. The church had not been built any length of time before it became desirable to add on aisles, which was done about the middle of the 14th century, but they were not so lofty as those of to-day, consequently the original arches were not so lofty as at present. With regard to the original church, although the nave was of the same size as

the present, he should explain that it was not nearly so high and was covered with a pointed roof. When the aisles were added clerestory windows were put in, and the position of those windows could now be clearly traced below the present clerestory, while in two places they had been opened after having been for some time sealed up. At the time that the aisles were added a porch in a rather curious position on the north side immediately to the west of the north transept was destroyed. The second enlargement appeared to have been a heightening, there being no addition to the church unless the south porch was entirely of that date. Outside the porch they would observe three niches. The original window of the south transept was still there, and at the east end of the chancel there were indications of the pointed roof. There were a couple of interesting monuments, one in the north aisle and one in the chapel, while another striking object was a fine candelabrum depending from the roof in the middle of the nave. In the churchyard at the time of the Dissolution there was a chantry chapel, a separate building which must have been of considerable size and great elaboration. When the chantries were abolished the building materials of the chapel were valued at £15, which must have been a very large sum to give for old materials in those days. If they multiplied it by ten they would get an approximation to its modern value.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE proceeded to give some information respecting the monuments. He said the one in the chancel would correspond with the decorated portion of the church. It was the effigy of a civilian in the dress of the latter half of the 14th century, about 1360. It had on a lay gown with tight sleeves coming to the wrist, over that other sleeves ending just below the elbow, and over that again a kind of tippet. There was a remarkable number of these effigies both in Somersetshire and elsewhere. This effigy had its head resting on a cushion, and at one time there was an angel supporting the figure, but the angel had all been cut away except one hand

supporting the head, and the other resting on the shoulder. With regard to the other effigy the vicar had asked him whether it had come from the Abbey of Athelney, but the fact that it was an emaciated figure, not a skeleton but a *cadaver*, did not necessarily imply that it came from a monastic establishment. It was the fashion in those days to represent persons in the same way as they were when lying in the tomb. Underneath the effigy were figures dressed as friars telling their beads. It might have come from Athelney, but there was nothing on it to lead him to conclude that it did.

Preb. BULLER, the vicar, was called upon to say a few words. He stated that the monument in the chancel had an inscription upon it, it was either John or Thomas of Slough,* that was Slough Farm. He found in the register that Bishop Ralph, of Shrewsbury, in January, 1337, gave two licenses to John of Slough, of North Curry, to have divine service celebrated in his oratory at Slough for a year (S.R.S. ix, 315). That effigy might represent the person.

Mr. BUCKLE added that there was a Norman doorway in the north aisle which had belonged to an earlier church, and been rebuilt in its present position. The old parish registers and the communion plate were then inspected, and there was also shown a couple of pewters which were in use in public houses at the time of the Commonwealth, and which were introduced into churches by the Puritans to show their disregard for the sacredness of material things.

Luncheon at Moredon.

The party next proceeded to Moredon, where they were hospitably entertained to luncheon by Major and Mrs. Barrett.

At the conclusion of the repast,

The PRESIDENT (Mr. Stanley) thanked Major and Mrs. Barrett for the splendid hospitality which they had shown.

* [I read the inscription "Thoma []ore atte Sloo."—ED.]

Personally, he had so often enjoyed their hospitality that he knew what it always was, and he was sure that that day they were most grateful to them for continuing the kindness which they showed to the Society twenty-six years ago. He (the President) only hoped that Major and Mrs. Barrett would be willing to show them the same hospitality twenty-six years hence. Every detail that could possibly have been thought of had been attended to in order to ensure the complete satisfaction of the guests.

"The health of Major and Mrs. Barrett and their family" was drunk with enthusiastic cheers.

Major BARRETT replied, and said he could assure the company that it had given Mrs. Barrett and himself very great pleasure indeed to receive the Society a second time. When he heard that they were coming to North Curry his mind was carried back to their last visit, and he was surprised to hear from Mr. Bidgood that it was so long ago as twenty-six years. He was very glad to hear that there was a chance of that fine old room, the Castle Hall, being turned to some good account, for it had been rather a cause of anxiety to him not to see it used to better purposes. The inhabitants of Taunton must feel grateful to the Society for having preserved to them such an historic building as Taunton Castle, and it was, therefore, their duty to support the Society, the membership of which, he trusted, would increase.

The company then adjourned to the grounds, where a further pleasant time was spent in strolling about, the weather being delightful.

Slough House.

The party was next driven to Slough House, which, by kind permission of the owner, the Hon. H. P. Gore-Langton, and of Mr. Thomas Hembrow, the tenant, was thrown open to inspection. The building is in a good state of preservation, and it has all the proportions of an Elizabethan manor house.

The party, or as many as could get into one of the principal rooms, having assembled, Mr. BUCKLE proceeded to give a description of the building. He said that the room in which they were gathered was part of the hall. They would have noticed as they came in that the porch had a beautiful facing of stone in alternate courses of blue lias and Ham Hill, which made altogether a very charming variety of colour. On entering the porch they passed through a screen of timber, and afterwards they found themselves in another narrow passage before entering that room. That passage was originally part of the hall, which then extended as far as the timber screen. The house was of the 16th century, and the style of the architecture was Gothic. Instead of having a large open roof, however, this hall had a fine timber ceiling with rooms over. At the principal end of the hall they would have expected to find one, if not two bay windows, and, indeed, two arches remained, one of which originally led into a bay window, the other into a recess which originally contained a flight of steps going downward, and passing through a doorway. Where the door led to he could not say; perhaps to the moat, possibly only to a cellar.

Mr. HEMBROW, the tenant, showed a portion of carved stonework, which was discovered in a wall of the building during some repairs, and was considered to have been part of the ancient oratory which was formerly there.

The Rev. H. F. S. GURNEY, vicar of Stoke St. Gregory, expressed his opinion that the house had a history as far back as King John, and there were formerly a Jack of Slough and a Jack of Knapp, who had to provide a feast in accordance with the customs of the manor.

After the inspection, Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE, on behalf of the Society, thanked Mr. Hembrow very cordially for his kindness in allowing them to visit the house, and Mr. HEMBROW, in reply, said he was very pleased to have had the opportunity of letting the members see it.



STOKE ST. GREGORY TOWER, FROM NORTH-WEST.

The Rev. E. H. BATES sends the following additional notes on Slough Court :

The original owners of this place, from which they took their name of "de la Slo" or "at Sloo," seem to have given place during the reign of Richard II to the family of Montague of Sutton Montis and Weston Bampffield in this county. (On the death of the head of the family, *temp.* Henry VIII, these two manors passed to three co-heiresses and their descendants ; but Slough seems to have been settled at some earlier date on a younger son, and the arms of Montague appear on an Elizabethan tomb in the churchyard. The Rev. H. F. S. Gurney, vicar of Stoke St. Gregory, has found in the register entries relating to the family down to 1600, when they seem to have died out. Slough afterwards belonged to the family of Court, and several monuments will be found in the south transept of Stoke Church.

Stoke St. Gregory Church.

The church of Stoke St. Gregory was next visited, which Mr. BUCKLE said was similar in many respects to the one at North Curry, but the foundation was considerably older. Here the octagonal tower was of the early date, when octagonal towers were commonly built, namely, the latter part of the 12th century. The original church, like the one at North Curry, was of cruciform shape without aisles. The church must be regarded to some extent as the one from which the builders at North Curry took their design, although they might have brought more skill to bear upon it and had more funds to work upon. The nave at Stoke St. Gregory was wider than the transepts. But the builder wanted to get a true octagon over the crossing, and in order to do so he had to get a true square base. Consequently the arches into the transepts were made thicker and richer than the nave and chancel arch ; above these arches the squinches under the

octagon were visible within the church. These arches had no capitals, but they had most remarkable bases, which when uncovered at the restoration turned out to be Early English capitals upside down. It was a great conundrum how they got in that position. It would be observed that the whole of those arches were built of Ham stone, whereas the upper part of the tower and the upper ring of the side arches were built of the native stone—a very beautiful grey sandstone. It had been suggested that at some time or other the original sandstone arches had been taken down and re-erected in Ham stone. In the south transept there were two windows of the early period, but he thought beyond that there was nothing left of the original 12th century church, and the whole of the present architectural features with the exception of those he had mentioned, dated from the latter part of the 15th century, the period when the aisles were added. It was interesting to note that in the churchyard, on the north side of the church, there was an altar tomb with quatrefoils round it, and upon the centre panel of each side were the Montacute arms with the initials J. M., while the Montacute coat was repeated on two capitals in the south transept. Of the furniture of the church the font was, perhaps, the most remarkable feature. It was an octagonal font with quatrefoils worked round it, one on each face. Four patterns were used, each being repeated on two adjoining sides. Though it was ingeniously worked he did not think anybody could say it was a beautiful font. A good many of the bench ends remained. The pulpit was a very interesting piece of carved woodwork, the figures thereon representing Time, Faith, Hope and Charity, on each of which the symbols were very strongly marked, and a fifth towards the east, which was extremely puzzling. A large reading desk formerly stood in the church, but this had now been converted into a vestry cupboard. On this were figures of women, with oil lamps, supposed to represent the five wise virgins. Mr. BUCKLE, in conclusion, drew attention to the stocks which

could be seen in the churchyard, under a yew tree, as at Creech St. Michael.

The Rev. H. F. S. GURNEY afterwards showed the church-plate and the registers in the schoolroom.

Thornfalcon Church.

From Stoke St. Gregory the drive was continued to the small but picturesque church of Thornfalcon. The visitors were met by the Rev. J. D. Bailey, the curate-in-charge, and Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE, in the absence of Mr. Buckle, gave some particulars of the building. He said that it was a 14th century church, with reticulated windows with quatrefoils. There used to be a rood loft over the entrance to the chancel, extending along the top of the screen, and the marks where the screen had been fixed were still visible. There being no clerestory, a window had been put in on the north side, almost parallel with the screen, to light the rood loft. On the other side another window had been put in to light the pulpit. There were several interesting bench ends, and the dates had been carried on since, one being 1542. Just inside the entrance to the doorway was a holy-water basin, and inside the church on the south side was a kind of niche, almost resembling an almonry, the purpose of which was not known.

In response to the kind invitation of Major and Mrs. Chisholm Batten, the members adjourned to the rectory lawn for tea. This over, and Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P., having, on behalf of the Society, thanked Major and Mrs. Chisholm Batten for their kind hospitality, the homeward journey was commenced, Taunton being reached about seven o'clock, thus bringing a most enjoyable and interesting excursion to a close.

Conversazione.

In the evening a conversazione was held in the Castle Hall, and there was a very good attendance, Mr. Stanley, M.P.,

and the Bishop of Clifton being among those present. Mr. F. W. Baker's Taunton quadrille band was engaged for the occasion. Songs were given by Mr. Frank White and Miss Barnicott, and the remainder of the evening was devoted to conversation among the members.