

The Fourth Day's Proceedings.

The members assembled at half-past nine on Friday morning for a tour in brakes through the Norton and Bishop's Lydeard district. The first halting place was

Norton Fitzwarren Church,

where the services of Mr. BUCKLE were, as usual, requisitioned. He pointed out that the walls of the church were for the most part very modern, and as to how far they were a reproduction of the old work he could not tell. The chancel, at any rate, seemed entirely modern, and all the windows were formed in the new stone, but in all probability the windows were reproductions of the old. The arcade supporting the nave from the

aisle was apparently original 13th century work, but it seemed to have been considerably altered, and he should think it must have been taken down and rebuilt, with the exception of the respond next the tower. A great feature of the church was the tower. It had true grandeur of a simple character, but with rather elaborate carving at a few points. The tower, so to speak, was a straggler, so close to Taunton; in character it resembled those to be found in West Somerset—at Minehead and St. Decuman's, and on the other side of the Quantocks. They met several of them in their expeditions from Bridgewater the previous year. Here, however, it seemed curious to find a tower of this type mixed in with the much richer towers with which the district abounds. Besides the two at Taunton, others they were going to visit at Bishop's Lydeard and Lydeard St. Lawrence, would prove to be fine specimens of the more elaborate tower which they generally met with in the middle of Somerset, so that that tower seemed in some degree to be out of place. Almost the only decorative features were the elaborate niche head on the south and the very large gargoyles to be found on all sides and at different levels. Another point of interest about the church was the screen. The figures standing on the rood loft were modern, and some of the mouldings on the top of the cornice, but except that, the screen itself was all old, and in an uncommonly good state of preservation. The cornice was a very remarkable one on account of the curious variation in the carving. The upper range of moulding (a grape vine of the ordinary character) was on a very coarse scale, and seemed to be more suitable for the roof. It was surprising to find it in its present position, especially when they saw the delicate succession of mouldings below, and it seemed to him a question whether that particular moulding belonged to the screen at all. The grape vine below was full of the most delicate work, and the grapes and leaves were on a much smaller scale. They certainly could not have been carved by the same people for the same purpose. The

moulding below that again was a very curious one. Right in the centre they saw a plough, drawn by three pair of oxen and driven by a man with a whip over his shoulder. After that came some very curious figures, including a man with a bow, which seemed to him to have got out of place. He thought the carvings in that moulding had been taken down some time or other and had not been put together properly. The man as at present placed seemed to be shooting the oxen, and if they looked further along they saw some hounds which appeared to belong to the man with the bow. In addition to those things mentioned there were two dragons, one swallowing a man. Farther along still they came across the inscription "Raphe Harris, C.W.," implying that he was churchwarden at the time the screen was first erected. That was very interesting, for although they were quite used to seeing churchwardens' names on work carved out during the last two hundred years, it was by no means so usual to find churchwardens putting their names on work at the beginning of the 16th century. At the extreme end there were two figures—probably intended for women—one having hold of the other's hair, while in the other hand each held a rod.

The Rector, the Rev. W. PROWSE HEWETT, read an extract from the *Church Times* of 1886, with regard to the screen, which was as follows:—"The screen at Norton is little known. Forty years ago, the rich painting and gilding were daubed over a light oak colour. It has suffered too in other ways. When the church was defaced, at the time of the restoration, it was entirely taken down, and only put back by the energy of the present rector, and then against the advice of most of the neighbouring clergy. It was pieced together in an entirely different manner to the original in order to fit the new chancel arch, and has, therefore, lost much of its value. Its chief glory, however, is in a wonderful series of animals carved on the lower side of the beam, representing the devastation of the country by a dragon or crocodile,

its chase and final overthrow by a man armed with a bow and arrows. There is a most spirited piece of carving where the beast swallows a man whole. The part representing the death of the dragon was stolen from the church, but was rescued by the rector from a curiosity shop in Taunton, and was replaced. The carving referred to a legend of a dragon having devastated the valley between Norton and Williton, finally meeting its death at Norton. The date of the screen is about 1500, and has on it the name of Raphe Harris, who was churchwarden at the time, and was buried at the west end of the church 1509 A.D."

The Old Roman Encampment.

The company next adjourned to some fields at the rear of the church which were formerly the site of an old Roman encampment. Mr. BIDGOOD made a few remarks relative to this, which he has since embodied in a paper (*see* Part II).

Cothelstone Manor House.

This was the next stopping place, and the Rev. W. ESDAILE gave a brief account of the Stawell family, who were the original owners of the manor. Sir John Stawell was the most distinguished member of the family, and he lived in the time of Charles I, and raised three troops of cavalry and one of infantry in support of the king's forces. He had a skirmish with Blake's forces at Bishop's Lydeard, but was defeated, and returned to Cothelstone, and then the mansion was destroyed—at any rate the greater part of it—by Blake. The house was restored in 1855-6 by the speaker's grandfather, and it was generally admitted to have been carefully restored in accordance with the original. Mr. ESDAILE then read a long account of Sir John Stawell's funeral, and mentioned that he had no less than fourteen sons and seven daughters.

Mr. BUCKLE followed with a description of the manor house, which, he said, was a most remarkable building. The general idea of the building was Tudor, as shown by its base course, and string course, and wide mullioned windows, but, associated with these features, were some of Renaissance character. The mullions were treated as balusters, not only on the outside but on the inside, each of which died against a square post into which the glass was fitted. The buttresses were most extraordinary. The small bases they stood upon were just like the pedestals of classical columns. As they rose they were diminished like classical columns, and on the top of the string course they were finished with pinnacles formed of ungainly pieces of carving. Then there was a very quaint gate-house, with distinctly classical arches, and some niches of very classical type with scallop shell at head. Inside the gate-house they found a couple of fine openings of the purest perpendicular, and if they looked at the tablet bearing the coat-of-arms over the doorway, they would see that the treatment of the Heraldry was of Jacobean character, but was enclosed in a very flat four-centred arch of quite a Tudor kind. It was a very remarkable building, forming a sort of link between the latest Tudor work and the Renaissance, but whether the whole of the buildings were of that same date he could not say. On one side there was a chimney of a very gothic character, and it seemed to him as though the building must once have been a thorough Tudor building.

Col. BRAMBLE pointed out that on one of the pinnacles of the house was a cannon ball, and when the Society were there last it was on the table.

Cothelstone Church.

A visit was afterwards paid to the church at the rear of the manor house, the principal interest in which Mr. BUCKLE explained consisted in the monuments of the Stawell family. Sir



COTHELSTONE MANOR HOUSE.

John was buried on one side of the chancel and another member of the family on the other, and there were two tombs each with two figures on them in the side chapel. Really the whole of the church was an Early English one, although it had perpendicular windows inserted. The whole of the walls of the nave and chancel, and the walls of the chapel were E. E., and there was a very plain E. E. arch leading into the tower. It was an exceedingly simple church, the arch and the chancel arch being about as plain as they could be. The tower had one curious feature about it on the outside, and that was that it had been raised in modern times in rather curious fashion. Over by the old belfry the string course at the bottom of the parapet remains with its gargoyles, but the parapet had been taken off. Mr. Buckle alluded to the carved bench ends, on one or two of which, and on the piers, the Stawell arms appeared.

Col. BRAMBLE afterwards described, in detail, the figures on the tombs in the chapel.

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

“ In the upper lights of the windows on the south side of the church are some good figures of English saints :—1, S. Thomas of Hereford (Cantelupe) ; 2, S. Ealdhelm of Sherborne ; 3, S. Cuthbert of Durham ; 4, S. Dunstan of Glastonbury (with the tongs) ; 5, S. Thomas of Canterbury ; 6, S. Richard of Chichester (de la Wych).”

The Rev. W. GRESWELL has kindly sent the following notes on Cothelston :

I derive Cothelston from *Cotele ton*, the ton or town of *Cotele*, a name well known in Somerset in early records, and in Cornwall. It has nothing to do with a “stone.” *Cotele* is Welsh or Keltic, not Saxon or Norman. There is *Cotele-asch* on Mendip.

Cothelston, a *capella dependens*, i.e., chapel dependent on Kingston. Together with Kingston, it was probably an early

endowment to the Priory and Convent of Taunton. It was William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester (1127), who gave Kingston to Taunton Priory. *Ecclesiam de Kingestona cum capellis et pertinentiis suis.*

The dividing line between Cothelston and Kingston is a clearly marked fence running down from the ridge of Quantock. Part of Cothelston is on Quantock. Merridge Hill is, I believe, in Cothelston, but the Spaxton parishioners have common rights on Merridge Hill. Merridge is an outlying member of Spaxton.

In *Collinson* (1790) Tirhill House appears as possession of Thomas Slocomb. "Tirhill, with a park ascending almost to the top of Quantock Hill." In Greenwood's *Somersetshire Delineated*, 1821: "Cothelston House, which till lately has been designated Tirhill House, is now the residence of Edward Jeffries Esdaile."

In Queen Elizabeth's time there is this notice: "Sir John Stawell, knt., hath one grounde inclosed for deere at Cothelston of one myle compas and keapeth twoo mares according to the statute." (*See Green's Somerset and the Armada*, p. 48.)

St. Agnes Well, with an ancient stone canopy, near the road. In the adjoining field "a nunnery" is said to have existed, and the site is pointed out by old men. I can find nothing else to corroborate the idea of a "nunnery," but the Prior and Convent of Taunton may have had a small lodging or cell here.

The walnut tree has been mentioned before in *Proceedings of Som. Arch. Society*. It was blown down in 1896. In Jeboult's *History of West Somerset*, it is said: "(On this manor a strange old custom prevails. Certain tenements are held by payment of so many bushels of rye. The tenants are called *Rye Renters*."

In a note on Durandus I see the following remark about the "glory" or "nimbus" round the head of a saint on one of the church windows:—"The nearest contemporary effigy of a saint which we have observed in stained glass is that of S. Thomas of Hereford, in the church of Cothelston, Somerset-

shire. Here the 'glory' is, as usual, of a circular shape."

Sometimes the nimbus was four-square, representing the four cardinal virtues. Why S. Thomas of Hereford should appear here I do not know.

Manor House. This is very interesting, as the home of the Stawells. A Sir John Stawell figures in the Elizabethan days as one of the most active men in the county in opposing the "Armada," and a Sir John Stawell also figures afterwards as a staunch Royalist. He suffered much at the hands of the Parliamentarians. His fine woods were cut down and sold.

The Stawells (*see* Collins's *Peerage*, vol. viii) were said to have been of Norman extraction. They first took their name from Stawel, in the parish of Murlinch in the county of Somerset. They lived at Cothelston in the 13th century.

The "line" ended in Mary, only daughter of Edward, 4th Lord Stawel, who married, September 3, 1750, the Right Hon. Henry Bilson Legge, fourth son of William, first Earl of Dartmouth.

I find in an old parish rate book that the Stawells are rated for Cothelston Farm in 1789, apparently the last time. Curiously enough, a John Gibbs is rated for Cothelston Farm in 1781 and 1785.

After this the property is rated to Edward Jeffreys, and so to the Esdailes.

In 1786, we gather from Savage's *History of Taunton*, p. 273, that "John Hammet, James Esdaile Hammet and Edward Jeffries Esdaile, Esquires, had a grant of the office of bailiff of the bailiwick of Taunton and Taunton Deane, and of sealers of weights and measures within the castle, borough, and lordship of Taunton."

John Hammet and James Esdaile Hammet are described as sons of Benjamin Hammet, alderman of the City of London; Edward Jeffries Esdaile, son of William Esdaile, of the said City of London, banker.

(*See also Dict. Nat. Biography*, under Esdaile.)

Bishop's Lydeard Church.

A move was next made to Bishop's Lydeard church, which proved to be of unusual interest. Mr. BUCKLE was again called upon to point out its leading features. The church, he said, contained many features of great interest. The inside was noted for the great quantity and variety of the carvings to be found there, but, perhaps, the most interesting thing about the whole church was the tower. It must be regarded as quite one of the most successful in the whole of the county. It was not only exceedingly successful as it stood, but it was rather remarkable in this county because it was a tower which had never been altered since it was first designed. In by far the majority of our towers of the first class a very much richer, though perhaps heavier parapet and set of pinnacles had been added, but this church retained the original parapet and pinnacles. The original design remained perfect from the base to the topmost pinnacle. It was very nearly identical with St. James's, Taunton, but there were some points of difference. This tower, for instance, was rather straighter—the buttresses were not so much inclined, and the working out of the detail was distinctly superior to that at St. James's. The author of this tower knew exactly from the time he started what he was going to do. In St. James's tower the designer got into difficulties at the belfry storey—he had not put the base of two buttresses quite in the right place, but he got over his error in a most ingenious way and built a beautiful tower. This was a case where at each corner of the tower there was a great group of buttresses, but what made the principal show were the two buttresses at right angles at each corner. They were carried up to the belfry storey, and opposite the belfry windows they finished in pinnacles which were set diagonally to the buttresses on which they stood, and these pinnacles were connected with the belfry wall by a thin wall of stone to prevent daylight appearing between the tower and



BISHOP'S LYDEARD TOWER, FROM SOUTH-EAST

pinnacle, but at the top they were nearly detached. That pair of buttresses did not lean against the tower, but against a buttress of four faces, which at the belfry storey changed into a plain square buttress set diagonally to the tower. This diagonal buttress was carried up through the tower and became the base of the pinnacle. That complicated, but perfectly fitting arrangement of buttresses, proved that the designer worked out every detail of the tower before he commenced building. Cheddar church had another absolutely perfect tower, but in by far the majority of instances the architect got into difficulties before they were finished. This tower was beautifully designed from base to top.

A brief discussion followed between Mr. BUCKLE and Mr. C. H. FOX, of Wellington, as to where the money came from for the building of these churches, when which the Vicar, the Rev. W. F. EUSTACE, inquired what date Mr. Buckle assigned to the tower, and he replied that it would not be later than about 1470.

Mr. BUCKLE then pointed out one or two features of interest to be found in the churchyard. At the lower end of the churchyard, he said, stood a churchyard cross with a good deal of carving about it, but the actual cross was modern. On the lower half of the shaft and the steps, and on the base of the shaft, were the figures of the twelve Apostles and other carved figures, which it was difficult to make out the meaning of. A little further to the right were fragments of another cross, the market cross, which about forty years ago was brought in from the road. The most interesting feature of the latter was the head of the cross, which had been replaced. Only the front was visible, and there were to be found, as usual, figures of the Virgin and Child, and other figures so dilapidated that nothing could be made of them.

The party then moved into the church, where Mr. BUCKLE was once more called upon. He explained that in the inside of that church they had work of two different dates of the Per-

pendicular period. The two arcades on the two sides of the nave were entirely different. One was a very low one, and the other was rather lofty. The low arcade represented the earlier stage of the building, when the aisles were narrower than they were at present, and the whole height of the church was considerably less. The chancel was a curious shape, the eastern part being a good deal narrower than the western. The chancel arch had been enlarged, and at the same time one bay of the chancel had been widened in a very ingenious way. The probability was that the old church had a north aisle, and the people who built the loftier southern arcade intended, in course of time, to have gone on and put a similar arcade on the other side. The aisle on the south side appeared to be contemporaneous with the tower. The north aisle was entirely new. The original aisle was narrower and lower, and did not extend further east than the chancel arch, and that explained how it was the screen extended over one aisle and the nave, and not over the other. This screen was another excellent example, similar on the whole to that at Norton, but with a good deal of difference in the detail of decoration. The paint was entirely modern, but the various mouldings were original, and there was nothing so characteristic as that at Norton. One of them contained the whole creed, and the two mouldings below that were very delicate. There was also a large collection of bench ends of rather an unusual character. The quaintest were near the west end. There was one picture of coursing, and another of a deer. Then they had the Pelican in Piety, which they knew was the badge of Richard Fox (Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1492-1494), which seemed to indicate the probability of their being done in his time. Then they had a coat of arms, with the fleur-de-lys or, and a curious picture of a windmill, with a packhorse below, and the miller himself, and next to that a ship. A good deal of question arises about them. Some asserted that the windmill marked the miller's pew, and that the ship was a captain's, and that they paid for them ;

but a more likely thing, to his mind, was that the carpenter got tired of foliage, and took to depicting the everyday life of the village. There was a very pretty Jacobean pulpit, and other things of great interest in the church.

The members next proceeded to the "Lethbridge Arms" Hotel, Bishop's Lydeard, where lunch was served. In the absence of the President, Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P. (who had left the party at Cothelstone, in order to drive home to Quantock Lodge), Mr. Cely-Trevilian presided, and after luncheon the following votes of thanks were passed :

Col. BRAMBLE proposed, and Mr. C. H. FOX seconded :

"That the best thanks of this Society be given to the President, E. J. Stanley, Esq., M.P., for the admirable way in which he has conducted the duties of the office upon such an important epoch in the existence of the Society."

"That the best thanks of the Society be given to the Worshipful the Mayor of Taunton for the kindness and hospitality which he has extended to the Society and for the great trouble which he has taken in the arrangements generally to which to so great an extent the success of the meeting is due."

"Also to the Local Committee, which, under the Presidency of his Worship the Mayor, has so admirably arranged the details of the meeting (coupled with the names of the Local Secretary, Mr. Samson, F.R.I.B.A., Mr. Barnicott, Mr. Tite, and Mr. Hammett)."

"To the Worshipful the Mayor and Town Clerk of Exeter, to the Rev. Canon Edmonds, B.D., and to Mr. W. H. Hamilton Rogers, F.S.A., to whom in their various ways the success of our excursion to Exeter is to be attributed."

"Also to those who have so kindly extended their hospitality to the Society : Major and Mrs. Barrett, Major and Mrs. Chisholm Batten, and Mr. and Mrs. Batchelor, not forgetting the Mayor of Taunton."

"Also to the Clergy of the different parishes who have permitted us to visit their churches and have in many cases put

themselves to considerable inconvenience to attend personally and assist us with valuable information (coupled with the name of Prebendary Askwith, who has given us the pleasure of his company and the benefit of his assistance throughout the meeting).”

“To the owners and occupiers of houses who have allowed us to visit them on the occasion. (The Hon. H. P. Gore-Langton and Mr. Hembrow, Mr. C. E. J. Esdaile and Mr. C. Hancock, and Mr. Batchelor. Also to Mr. Wilfred Marshall for permitting us to pass through his private roads).”

“To Mr. Edmund Buckle for his able explanations of the numerous objects of architectural interest visited by the Society.”

“To the District Superintendent at Exeter (Mr. Campfield) and the Station Master of Taunton (Mr. Lailey) for the excellent arrangements made for the convenience of the members.”

Mr. TREVILIAN, who presided, supported the resolution, and included in it the names of the Joint Hon. Secs.: Col. Bramble and Rev. F. W. Weaver.

Lydeard St. Lawrence

After luncheon the journey was resumed to Lydeard St. Lawrence, where the visitors were received at the church by the Rev. F. L. Hughes, vicar. Mr. BUCKLE said that the tower of the church was of a different character generally, from that at Bishop's Lydeard. This was a very plain, simple tower, but it had an uncommonly good outline, and was exceedingly effective from every point of view. Here they had the same general principle as at Bishop's Lydeard, although without any of the elaboration, the buttresses and the rest of the tower being very plain. The west window was a small one, and there was no west door. The windows in the belfry were of sandstone, as was most of the other detail of the

church. All those hills around them produced stone which could be worked up effectively as they saw. The Ham Hill stone used in the church was almost all modern, as this place was some distance from those quarries. The bulk of the church was of the 14th century—the nave, the chancel, the windows therein, and the walls being all of that period. The chancel had never been altered since that date, it was practically untouched, and had the small east window which was used at that time. The chancel arch was of a simple character, its most interesting feature was that where it sprang out from the wall it had no shafts to support it all. That arrangement was met with late in the Perpendicular period, because then the great screens were common, and it was felt to be a waste of good work to put elaborate piers under the chancel arch, where they would never be seen. The chancel contained a great deal of pretty work. There was a curious sedilia and piscina, but they did not seem to harmonise one with another. They would notice what a fine nave the church had. The aisle was a later addition, probably in the 15th century. The pillars which separated the aisle from the nave, and the capitals were of the same period. The idea of having the capital continuous all the way round the pillar was rather characteristic of Devonshire. In the West of Somerset this treatment was often to be found. The first capital at the west end represented a fox and goose; the second had four angels carved round it; the third was comparatively common-place, having just a piece of foliage round it. But the fourth was decidedly curious, having a piece of interlaced pattern work all round. That was not an arrangement which a workman of the 15th century would be likely to think of at all, and the only suggestion he could make was that this bit of design was copied by a country workman from an ancient bit of Saxon carving, which, perhaps, came out of an older church. The last capital was for the most part broken away. The windows of the nave, with the exception of one, were probably of the same date as the arcade.

The three windows on the south side were built as it were in perspective—large, middle-sized, small—and the effect of these three windows, when looking down the nave from the chancel, was to make the nave look longer than it really was. On the other hand, standing at the west end the nave looks distinctly shorter, because the eye instinctively assumes a row of windows to be all of about the same size. It might be that the people who put in the big window had intended to bring the chancel in effect more down into the church. There were, unquestionably, cases where buildings had been deliberately designed with that effect in view. But, on the other hand, it might be a mere accident. The screen was interesting, as there was no vaulting on the face of it towards the nave. The tradition was that the screen was never finished, and its appearance supported the belief. It was very late, and was perhaps the “enterclose” building in 1532 (See *Wells Wills*). The bench ends were pretty, but there was nothing very characteristic about them. The pulpit was of Jacobean work, and it looked as if it had been made up very much. There was a curious “squint” looking into the chancel, with an iron bar in the centre, intended, no doubt, as a support to the wall over it.

Combe Florey.

The last place visited was the pretty little village of Combe Florey. It will be remembered that the witty Sydney Smith, from 1829 until his death, February 22nd, 1845, was rector of this parish. Before visiting the church, the party were kindly entertained to tea by Mr. and Mrs. Batchelor. A move was afterwards made to the church. Mr. BUCKLE said that the south wall of the nave dated from the 13th century, but the only features of that date still remaining were the doorway and the turret. The aisle seemed to have been taken down and rebuilt sometime in the last century, but

with Early English arches inserted over the windows. There were so many of these arches as to indicate that there were several windows in the Early English church which stood there, but except for certain remnants there was nothing left of an earlier period than the Perpendicular time. The arcade there had got the angel capitals as at Lydeard St. Lawrence, but the rest of the Perpendicular work was of a very simple character. The windows there had the ordinary tracery which was found in most of the Somerset churches. The chancel was entirely modern, but in one of the windows there were two little fragments of 15th century stained glass. The stone used in the church was a kind of local sand stone, of a dark red colour, which could be seen in the arcades. The mullions and tracery of the windows were all of that red sandstone, and there was hardly any of the Ham Hill stone imported there. The bench ends were more elaborate than any they had seen during these excursions. There was formerly a screen there, and the few fragments left of it had been worked up into the present reading desk and pulpit. In the wall of the north aisle was a small stone slab with the following inscription, in 13th century character, to one of the nuns of Cannington, whose heart was there immured;—*Le Quer : Dame : Maud de : Merriete : nonayne : de : Cannyntune.*" (See *Proceedings*, vol. xi, pt. ii, 11).

There seemed to have been a special fancy among the monastic orders for being buried in two different places in the belief that they got the benefit of the prayers in both places of worship. Thus the heart was buried in one place and the body in another. The tower of the church was a very pretty one of red sandstone. The building altogether stood in a very pretty situation.

Lieut.-Col. BRAMBLE made a few remarks as to some recumbent effigies, which were not of a earlier date than 1270 and not later than 1285. The figures were in complete chain armour.

The Gate House was afterwards inspected, and this concluded the excursion. The homeward journey was then made, Taunton being reached about 7.30. This was the last of the excursions, which throughout had been of a most successful and enjoyable character, and the weather each day was all that could have been desired.