

Armour in Somerset Churches

BY F. H. CRIPPS-DAY

IF we except a few wonderful early headpieces we may say that the armour hanging in our churches possesses but little intrinsic appeal, but its existence is intimately bound up with the habits, customs and history of the country, and it is with that aspect in view that the following list has been made.

I. 'CHURCH ARMOUR, more generally called 'funeral'¹ armour, is the visible evidence of an old custom which down to the fifteenth century had been full of religious feeling. From very early times it was a practice, common in many countries, to bury in the grave the arms, armour, and horse of a dead warrior with the corpse. This was, I think, quite distinct from and not a precursor of the later custom of preserving the arms and armour of a dead leader or conquered enemy in a pagan temple or a Christian church. The one was a provision of arms for use of a dead man in the next world; the other was an offering to the gods, or a memorial of the deceased, or a trophy of victory.

A good example of this 'funeral armour' may be found in Dallaway's *Inquiries into the Origin and Progress of the Science of Heraldry in England*, where an engraving by Derick Theodore

¹ 'Funeral armour' may be defined as arms and armour carried at a funeral, and/or placed in a church in memory of a person buried in the church or its churchyard, or to whom a monument in the church has been erected, which arms and armour may have (i) been worn by and/or belonged to the deceased, (ii) been real armour purchased by the family or supplied by the heralds, (iii) been made by a blacksmith to the order of the family or heralds.

de Brijon, 1587, after a drawing by Thomas Lant, Windsor Herald (B.M., No. 137, e. 10), represents the funeral of Sir Philip Sydney (Plate IV). Portcullis carried the spurs, Blue-mantel the pair of gauntlets, Rouge Dragon the helmet crested with 'A porcupine statant *az.* quilled, collared and chained *or*', Richmond the targe and sword, Somerset the surcoat, and Clarenceux walked last as king of arms. All wear mourning hoods and tabards.

II. TOWN ARMOUR. The inhabitants of cities and towns had to find, at their 'common charges and expenses', 'such harness and weapons as shall be appointed by Commissioners of the Sovereign', and this armour was kept in a place nominated by the Commissioners. It would seem that among the places selected for the keeping of armour and arms for the town levies were the parish churches, and it is on this account that we still find secular arms and armour preserved in many of them. This armour has, therefore, nothing whatever to do with the arms and armour of the achievement hung in churches over the monuments of, or in memory of, important persons whose funerals took place in the churches.

III. ARMOUR FROM BATTLEFIELDS. A third and quite distinct class of armour and weapons, occasionally found in our churches, consist of relics dug up from fields of battle or obtained from moats of castles, which, for want of a better resting-place, have found their way to the local churches.

LIST OF CHURCHES IN SOMERSET CONTAINING ARMOUR

BARRINGTON (St. Mary the Virgin)

1. In Barrington Court is preserved a close helmet which is made up of a skull with spike and visor of the sixteenth century, a gorget of the seventeenth century and a mezail made by a blacksmith (Plate V, fig. 2).

This helmet is said to have hung until comparatively recently in the parish church, after which it was exhibited for several years in the Somerset County Museum.

Barrington Court was built by Henry Daubeney, 2nd Baron and 1st Earl of Bridgewater, *ob.* 1548. It was purchased in 1605 by Sir Thomas Phelips, kt. and bt., who built the manor-

house, who died in 1618, leaving a son, Thomas Phillips, *b.* 1590.

In the church are buried several of the Strode family who resided in the parish and who also lived at the Court, where may be seen the arms of Strode in the chimney-piece of the drawing-room.

CHILCOMPTON (St. John)

Following the description of the tomb of Richard Seward in Collinson's *History of Somerset* (1791), ii, 130, the following occurs: 'In the wall over this monument are some irons, which seem to have supported funereal trophies; and a helmet of painted wood, with a wreath thereon is still preserved.'

CHURCHILL (St. John the Baptist)

1. There are a triple-bar 'lobster-tailed' pot headpiece, a breast-plate and a gorget plate of the Cromwellian period suspended on the N. wall of the s. aisle (Plate VI, fig. 4).

2. A peascod breast-plate.

Tradition: There is no tradition attaching to these pieces. In the church are:

(a) A brass in memory of 'Ralphe Jenyns Esquer', *ob.* 1572.

(b) A monument to Thomas Latch, *ob.* 1644. On this monument he is represented in buff-coat, boots and spurs.

It is possible that this Cromwellian suit is not 'town-armour', but belonged to Thomas Latch.

The peascod breast-plate was perhaps placed in the church, when some old house was pulled down. Old armour did find its way to churches, just as nowadays it finds its way to museums.

Churchill Court still exists. It was purchased from the Jenyns family in 1651 by Sir John Churchill, *ob.* 1655. There are recumbent effigies of a Churchill and his lady.

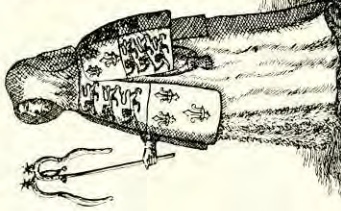
CHEDZOY (St. Mary)

Banners of the Stradling family, said to have been carried in action.

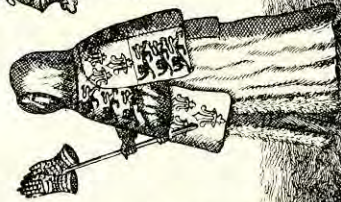
At s. end of transept on the E. wall is a mural monument of

*Quinqve socialis et eorū nomina, gerentes insignia & ornamenta
 Five herules and their names, carrying the Aquiverhoode*

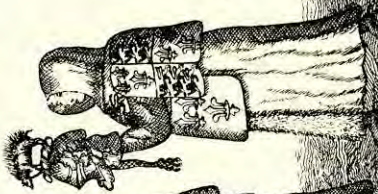
William Sanger
at Breccelles



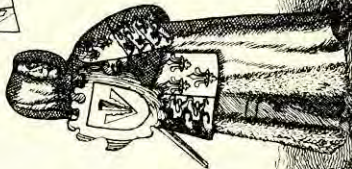
Humphrey Hales
at Blannometz



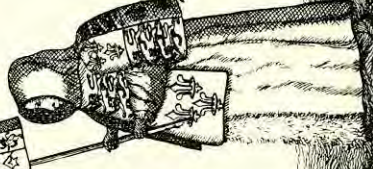
Nicholas Radey
at the Puys Tounyn.



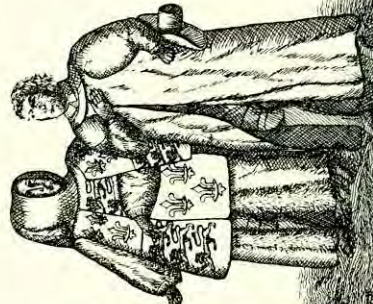
Roberte Lea
at Richmont



Robert Coluar
at Somersett.



Robert Cook
at Clamwicke
King of Armes



PROCESSION OF HERALDS at the FUNERAL of SIR PHILIP SYDNEY, 1587.

Copied from a Roll drawn by Thomas Lant, Windsor Herald

Published June 1. 1780 by I. Dalloway.

J. Goussier del. sculp.

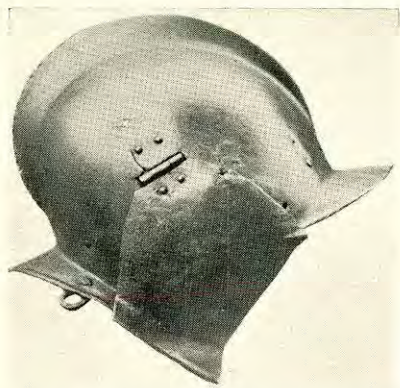


Fig. 3. FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD

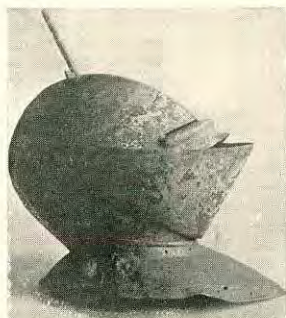


Fig. 2. BARRINGTON

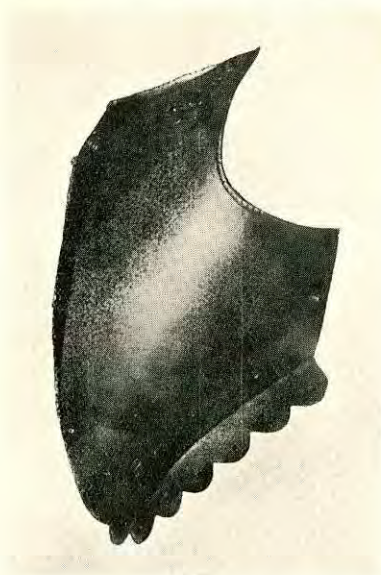


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD
ARMOUR IN SOMERSET CHURCHES

Fig. 1. TRENT

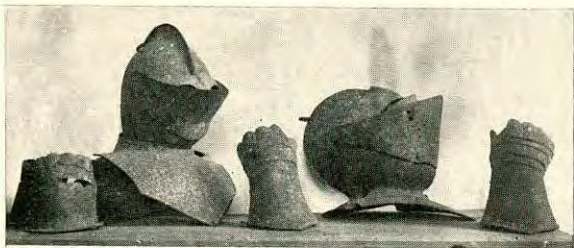


Fig. 2. KITTISFORD PLATE VI

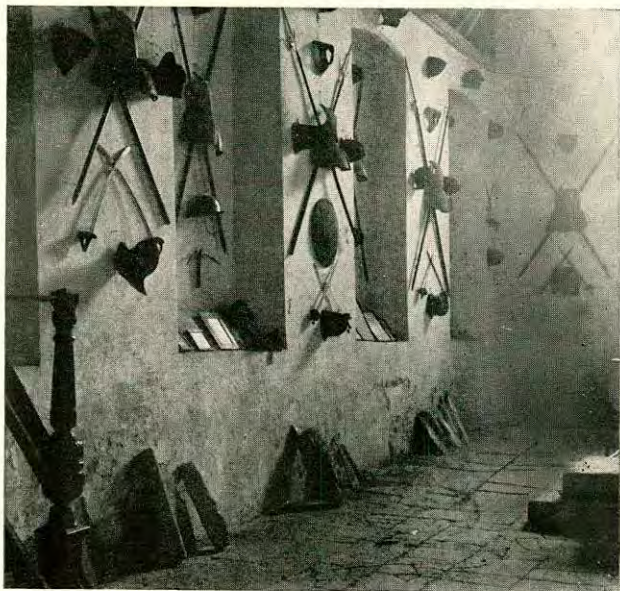
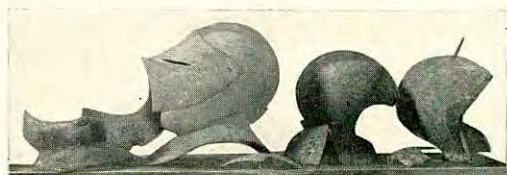


Fig. 3. FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD



Fig. 4. CHURCHILL

Fig. 1.

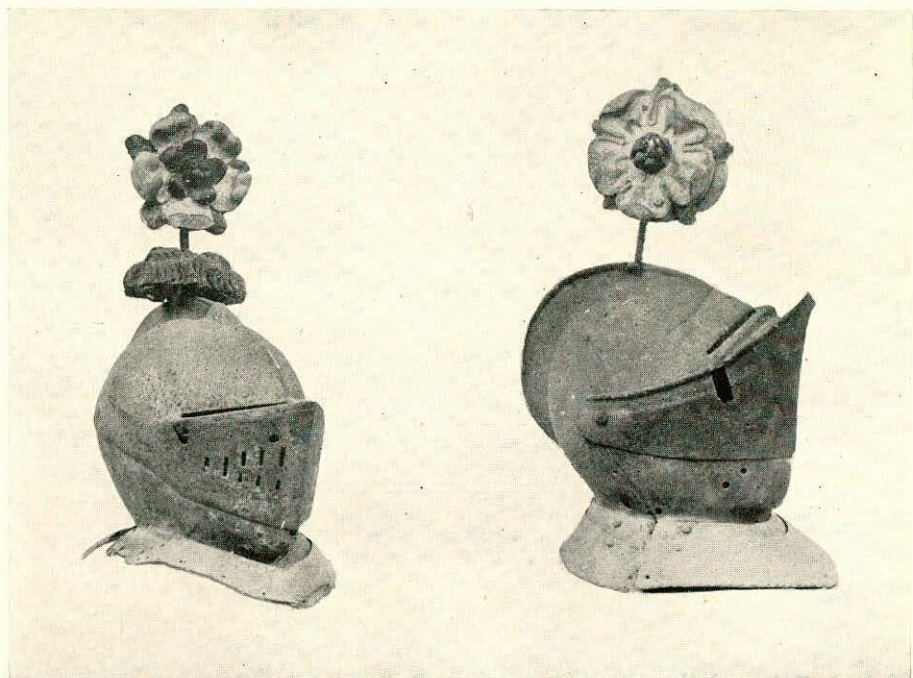
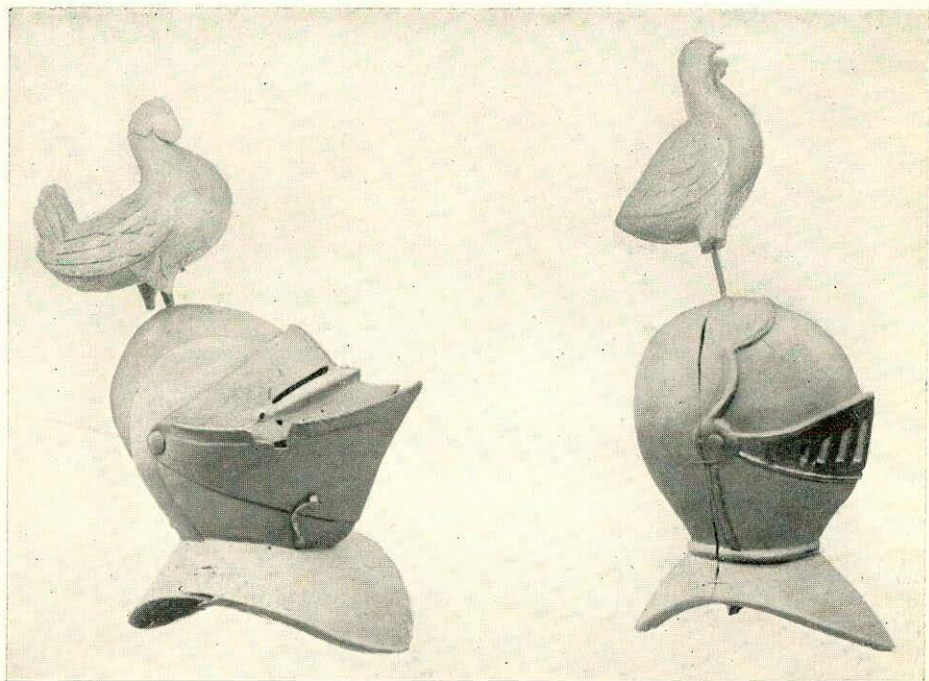


Fig. 3.

ILMINSTER

Fig. 4.



Fig. 1. ENMORE



Fig. 2. RODNEY STOKE

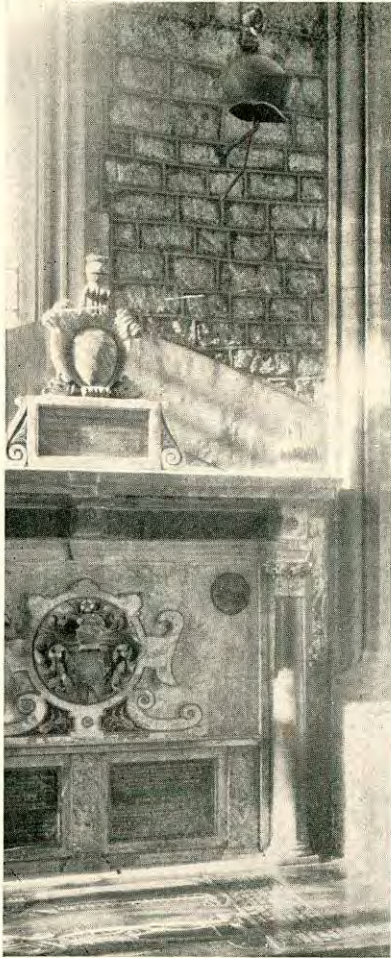


Fig. 4. ILMINSTER



Fig. 3. RODNEY STOKE



Fig. 5. N. CADBURY



Fig. 1. MEARE



Fig. 2. MEARE



Fig. 3. ST. DECUMAN'S, WATCHET
ARMOUR IN SOMERSET CHURCHES

black stone with the inscription : ' Near this place lie interred the remains of William, John Jeanes, and Edward, sons of Richard and Jane Stradling. John Jeanes Stradling died 26th January 1758, aged 3 years ; Edward, Jan. 16th 1759, aged 1 year ; William, Apr. 30th 1767, aged 7 years.'

Some of the soldiers killed in the battle of Sedgemoor were buried here.

DUNSTER (The Priory Chapel)

Some few years ago armour was found walled up in the church and taken to the Castle. It was locally termed ' village armour ', and it is believed to have consisted chiefly of pikes and other hafted weapons.

ENMORE (St. Michael)

1. Helmet, barred, with umbril, buffe and gorget plates, crested with a wyvern's head. It is suspended on the n. side of the chancel arch (Plate VIII, fig. 1).

Tradition : This helmet is associated with the family of Malet of Enmore.

Of this family was Elizabeth (*ob.* 1681), daughter of John Malet, and known as ' la triste héritière ' (heiress of John Malet). She married John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-80), the poet, who was educated at Burford and Wadham.

Crest : *A wyvern's head ppr.* (Malet).

2. Close helmet, late sixteenth century, suspended over the pulpit.

Tradition : None.

FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD (Chapel of the Castle, dedicated to St. Leonard)

The chapel of the Castle, or at all events an older building on the same site, was once the church of the parish. Adjoining was a medieval manor-house where lived the family of Hungerford from 1369 to 1681, who in 1383 converted the house into a castle, and at the same time appropriated the parish church as a domestic chapel for the castle. Walter, Lord Hungerford, High Treasurer of England, in 1443 built the present parish church. At the same time the old parish church was probably pulled down, and on the site the present chapel was built.

We know from pictures in Grose's *Antiquities* that in 1774 the chapel was roofless. It was repaired in 1779, and again by Colonel John Houlton in 1806. On the E. side of the altar is a medieval fresco of St. George and the Dragon. The St. George is shown wearing a pig-faced bascinet with raised visor, and plate-armour of the fifteenth century. In the side chapel are the effigies of Sir Thomas Hungerford (*ob.* 1398, who had acquired the Castle in 1369) and his wife. In the lady chapel are the effigies of Sir Edward Hungerford and his wife Margaret. In the S.E. corner of the chapel is an altar tomb to the memory of Sir Walter Hungerford (1585). The following are known to have been buried in the chapel :

Sir Thomas Hungerford, *ob.* 1398, and Joanna his wife, *ob.* 1412.

Edward Hungerford, *ob.* 1585.

Sir Walter of Farleigh, *ob.* 1596.

Sir Edward (half brother of Sir Walter), *ob.* 1607, and Jane his wife.

Mary Shaa, sister of Sir Edward, *ob.* 1613.

Sir Edward, *ob.* 1648, and his wife Margaret, *ob.* 1672.

Jane Hall, 1st wife of Sir Edward, *ob.* 1664.

Jane Culne, 2nd wife of Sir Edward, *ob.* 1674.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the chapel became a kind of museum for curiosities found in and about Farleigh. Into it were brought a quantity of arms and armour, including that from the Castle.¹ The best pieces were taken away and sold shortly before the war. Some of these pieces were undoubtedly those of men of importance, and must have been the armour of the Hungerford knights.² No doubt some of the armour is that which the lord of Farleigh-Hungerford was

¹ Grose, *Antiquities of England* (1783 edit.), v, 27. 'Farley Castle. Near the entrance into the chapel stands a chest of old armour, formerly belonging to the Hungerfords, and brought from the castle.' Collinson, *History of Somerset* (1791), iii, 357. 'Against the s. wall stands the old pulpit, and underneath it are several pieces of armour, such as a head-piece, breast-plate, with a saddle, brought hither in an old chest from the castle hall about the time of its demolition.'

² In 1449, Walter Lord Hungerford left to Robert Hungerford his grandson 'my best pair of cuirasses with all belonging thereto to be chosen by him out of my armoury at Farleigh Hungerford'.

bound to provide. In the collection of the writer are, (1) a very fine peascod breast-plate (Plate V, fig. 4), (2) a breast and back of peascod form (Plate V, fig. 5), and (3) a burgonet (Plate V, fig. 3), all from Farleigh-Hungerford.

Shortly before the war there were 140 head-pieces, now there are 43 cabassets, 5 morions, 3 casques, 20 pikes, a number of breast-plates, tassets, gorgets for pikemen, etc. There is one mortuary barred helmet of late sixteenth century, which has a spike for a crest. This piece must have been a helmet placed in the chapel after the funeral of a Hungerford buried there, not improbably that of Sir Edward Hungerford, died 1607. The illustration (Plate VI, fig. 3) is of the chapel as it is to-day.

GOATHURST (St. Edward)

1. Close helmet of seventeenth century with crest of a bird.
2. Sword. Now hanging on the wall above the family pew.

Tradition: Associated with the monument of Sir Charles Kemeys-Tynte, *ob.* 1633.

The manor of Halswell which was, for many generations, in the family of Halswell, passed through the female line to Jane, daughter of Sir Charles Kemeys, and Mary Wharton, daughter of Philip 4th Baron Wharton, who married (1704) Sir John Tynte, 2nd bart., from whom it descended in the female line to the present family owning the manor, in whose favour was recently revived the Barony of Wharton.

Crest: *Out of a ducal coronet a demi-griffin all or.* (Kemeys).

ILMINSTER (St. Mary)

1. Close helmet, 1575-80, with gorget of *circa* 1620 added, crested with a cock (Plate VII, fig. 1). The helmet is painted grey, with gilt mezail, and hangs in the s. transept.

2. Close helmet, made of wood, seventeenth century, crested with a cock (Plate VII, fig. 2). It is hung in the s. transept.

Tradition: Both the above are associated with the Combe family.

3. Close helmet, late sixteenth century, crested with a rose, carved on one side only (Plate VII, fig. 4).

4. Close helmet, late sixteenth century, crested with a rose, carved on each side (Plate VII, fig. 3; and Plate VIII, fig. 4).

The last two helmets hang in the s. transept, and are both real head-pieces. In both cases the crests are damaged by the loss of the attires.

Tradition : Both helmets are associated with the Wadham family. Helmet no. 3 with the funeral of John (*ob.* 1577), son of Sir William Wadham, *ob.* 1541. John married Joan, daughter and co-heiress of John Tregarthen of Cornwall. He was the father of Nicholas Wadham (*ob.* 1609), who together with Dorothy, his wife (*ob.* 1618), founded Wadham College. There is a brass to the memory of Nicholas and Dorothy.

Arms : *Gu, a chevron betw. three roses arg.* (Wadham).

Crest : *The attires of a buck or, between the attires a rose arg.* (Wadham).

KITTISFORD (St. Nicholas)

1. Close helmet with plume holder, *temp.* Charles I.
2. A skull with spike, plume holder, third quarter of sixteenth century.
3. Skull-piece, which once had a spike, with plume holder, *temp.* James I.
4. Chin-piece, engraved and gilt.
- 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Parts of helmets.

All the above are real pieces and were not made for a funeral. They are illustrated in Plate VI, fig. 2.

Tradition : All these pieces are said to have been found in a coffin dug up in the chancel in 1864, but the story seems improbable.

LONG ASHTON (All Saints)

The church has many fine monuments to the Smyths of Ashton Court, who acquired the manor of Long Ashton in 1545.

It is said that in *circ.* 1876, when the church underwent restoration, a complete suit of armour was removed, together with other objects of interest such as banners, etc.

Collinson, *History of Somerset* (1791), notes that 'on the walls some remnants of banners and other insignia of Sir Hugh Smyth (*ob.* 1680) are suspended' (Vol. ii, p. 300).

There were buried in the church, Hugh Smyth (*ob.* 1580), Sir Hugh Smyth (*ob.* 1627), Sir Thomas Smyth (*ob.* 1642), Sir Hugh Smyth (*ob.* 1680).

MEARE (The Blessed Virgin Mary)

There were nine pieces of town armour in this church, which until 1886 were kept in the church chest. Meare once sent fifteen men in armour to assist the abbots of Glastonbury, and the armour is said to be that of this force (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* ix, i, 37).

In 1886 a layman in the parish persuaded the vicar of that time to permit the armour to be sent on loan to the Glastonbury Museum (where it is exhibited at the time of writing). It is to be hoped that the armour will soon be returned to the church and hung in the tower, for as armour it is of no particular interest from a museum point of view, but as town armour provided for 'ablemen' of Meare, it is exceedingly interesting, and ought to be preserved to-day in the same place as the Commissioners of the Muster ordered it to be kept.

Two pikemen's suits are here illustrated (Plate IX, figs. 1, 2). One of the breastplates is of peascod form adapted later for a pikeman.

NORTH CADBURY (St. Michael)

1. Close helmet, seventeenth century, now in the vestry (Plate VIII, fig. 5). It is crested with a bird. The skull and chin-piece are real pieces of the seventeenth century. The visor is one made for a funeral. The original iron perch has been preserved and put up in the vestry.

Tradition: The helmet is associated with the funeral of Matthew Ewens, the elder, of North Cadbury, Esquire, *ob.* 1629. He married Katherine Hales. He was son of Alexander Ewens and grandson of John Ewens of Wincanton (*ob.* 1585). Into the N. wall of the tower is built an armorial tablet with arms cut in stone bearing *az. a fess between two fleurs-de-lis or.* (Ewens) impaling *gu. three arrows or feathered and barbed arg.* (Hales). Over the shield is the crest,—*On a mound vert a curlew rising ppr.* (Ewens). It appears that some thirty years ago when the church was restored this tablet was put up in the tower, where three table-tombs from the chancel and the body of the church were likewise placed. One of the tombs is that of a Botreaux. On the table-tomb are effigies of himself and his wife which, however, were erected after the death of the widow.

Neither of the other table-tombs bear any inscription or heraldry. The ornament of strapwork design dates them as of the end of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. There is no record identifying either tomb with the Ewens family.

QUEEN CAMEL (St. Barnabas)

There was a helmet in the church within living memory. It is no longer there, and it is believed that it was removed to Hazelgrove, the residence of the Mildmay family near by, when the church was restored some thirty years ago. At the same time a portrait of Queen Elizabeth was taken away.

The Mildmay family first came to Queen Camel in 1567. The earliest memorial to the family is to Sir Humphrey Mildmay of Hazelgrove, *ob.* 1690 ; but it is believed that members of the family of earlier date were buried in the church.

RODNEY STOKE (St. Leonard)

1. Armet, typically English, *circ.* 1520, with gorget plates added (Plate VIII, fig. 2).

2. Sword, made for a funeral, with a sixteenth-century pommel (Plate VIII, fig. 3).

The helmet and sword are suspended over the Rodney monument in the side chapel.

Tradition: Associated with the funeral of Sir Thomas Rodney, *ob.* 1478, but this association must be without foundation. It is said that both sword and helmet came from Old Rodney manor-house.

There are also buried in the chapel, Sir Edward Rodney (*ob.* 1657), son of Sir Thomas Rodney, without monument, and George Rodney (*ob.* 1651), with monument.

TRENT (St. Andrew)

1. Close helmet of end of sixteenth century, with gorget plates of seventeenth century added. There is a ring attached to the skull to suspend it.

2. Close helmet made for a funeral, seventeenth century. This helmet also has a ring.

3. A pair of gauntlets made for a funeral.

4. A pair of gauntlets made for a funeral.

All the above are illustrated in Plate VI, fig. 1.

Tradition : The armour is said to have been brought from Trent House, the residence of Sir Francis Wyndham.

The N. aisle is the burial-place of the Gerard and Wyndham families, where are buried, (1) William Gerard of Trent, *ob.* 1567, and Mary his wife, *ob.* 1577 ; (2) William Gerard, grandchild of above, *ob.* 1664, and probably son of (3) Thomas Gerard, son of William and Mary above, and Anne his wife, *ob.* 1583.

The daughter of Thomas Gerard was heiress to the Gerard estate, and married Colonel Wyndham, created a baronet in 1676.

WATCHET (St. Decuman's)

1. Close helmet, 1565-75, crested, with a lion's head erased within a fetterlock.

2. Close helmet, early seventeenth century, crested as in (1).

3. Officer of pikeman's pot, with pieces added and crested as in (1).

All the above are illustrated in Plate IX, fig. 3.

These helmets hang in the chancel (no. 1), on the N. wall of the nave (no. 2), and on the S. wall of the nave (no. 3).

A fourth helmet was preserved in the church within living memory, but has been stolen ; there are three other empty perches.

Tradition : Associated with the Wyndham family. There are brasses in memory of Sir John Wyndham (*ob.* 1571), John Wyndham (*ob.* 1572), monuments to the memory of Henry and George Wyndham (*ob.* 1619, *ob.* 1624), Sir William Wyndham (*ob.* 1683).

Crest : *A lion's head erased or, within a fetterlock of the same, the arch compony counter compony, or and az.* (Wyndham).

WHITELACKINGTON (The Blessed Virgin Mary)

1. Close helmet, *circ.* 1565-75.

2. Close helmet, *circ.* 1565-75.

3. Sword with wheel pommel, *circ.* 1475-80, blade of sixteenth century.

4. Sword, made for the funeral.

All the above are illustrated in Plate V, fig. 1.

Tradition : The helmets and swords are associated with the

burials of the Speke family. Sir Thomas Speke, son of Sir George (*ob.* 1637, of whom there is a monument in the church) was buried in St. Dunstan's, London. In the Muster Roll of Somersetshire for 1569 the Sir George Speke of the time furnished a considerable amount of armour for the 'General Levy'.

'In the N. transept is an ancient but stately mural monument, the body of which is a tomb covered with a black stone beneath a rich arched canopy, embellished with arms and Gothic ornaments. On the top are five hexagonal twisted pillars, on the tops of two of which are old helmets, and near them two ancient small swords' (*Collinson*, i, 69).

Arms : *Barry of Eight az. and arg. over all an Eagle displayed with 2 heads gu.* (Speke).

Crest : *Porcupine charged by St. George to a dexter hand holding a battle-axe* (Speke).

(*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* xxxvii, i, 39, 40 ; lxxiii, liii.)