

PART II.—PAPERS, ETC.

Bruton Church

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THE parish Church of St. Mary, Bruton, is the finest in East Somerset.

It consists of a Perpendicular nave and aisles, a splendid west tower, a classical chancel and vestry of 1743, and a small second tower forming a north porch—a most unusual feature.¹

There has been a marked difference of opinion regarding its nature and history.

A monastery of Augustinian Canons was founded at Bruton in 1142. It has been assumed by some that the present Church is the parochial nave of the monastic church, and that the 1743 chancel took the place of the conventual choir destroyed after the suppression of the monastery. On the other hand it has been held that this Church was always wholly parochial, and that the priory church was a separate building which has long since entirely disappeared.²

Evidence will now be given to prove that this second view is the true one.

Beneath the chancel of the present Church is an early fourteenth-century crypt. It has windows in east and side walls.

¹ The most similar case is that of Blakeney in Norfolk, not unlike in general plan and appearance. At Purton and Wanborough in Wiltshire later western towers have been added to churches still retaining earlier central spires. There are several cases where remnants of earlier lateral towers remain, the place of which as towers has been taken by Perpendicular west towers, e.g. Newington-on-the-Street, Kent, where the base of the earlier tower on the north side of the chancel was retained as a vestry.

² This view was taken by Mr. R. H. Carpenter, the architect of the Victorian restoration, in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* xxiv (1878), i, 32.

This shows that the fourteenth-century chancel was co-terminous with it, and was 40 ft. by 18 ft. only, smaller than the choir of the much smaller priory of Dunster. Further, it is known that this chancel was not enlarged before the rebuilding in 1743. The visitation of 1526¹ shows that even then there were 17 canons here, as compared with 13 at Taunton, 10 at Keynsham and 13 monks at Muchelney. It is impossible that this small building can have been sufficient for the needs of so large a community.

Moreover, there is no evidence of any conventual buildings having been attached to the Church. The south side of the nave shows no trace of cloisters; it has windows of normal size and a doorway opposite the main north door in the usual parochial manner and no processional doorway near either end.

The evidence of the documents points in the same direction, and it may be suggested that it is conclusive.

In the *Bruton Cartulary* is the record of a donation,² probably of the thirteenth century, to the light of the greater church of the Blessed Mary at Bruton, clearly the monastic as contrasted with the parish church. In 1417 Richard Bruton, a wealthy ecclesiastic, directed that his body be buried *in ecclesia parochiali in cancello*.³ The altar of St. Aldhelm is specified as being in *navi ecclesie conventualis* in 1458.⁴ In 1493 Margery Moleyns left money to the works of the parish church of Bruton, and also to Our Lady in the priory church.⁵ In 1503 the new chapel of Our Lady in the priory church is mentioned; in 1506 the nave of the parish church.⁶ In 1509 John Harman leaves money for the image of St. Mary in the nave of the priory church, to the fraternity of the blessed Virgin Mary in the parish chapel, to the work of the said new chapel of St. Mary of Bruton, and also to the work of the parish church of Bruton.⁷ In these wills then we find mention of the two churches separately, of the nave of the conventual church, and of its new lady chapel, of the nave and chancel of the parish church, and of a new lady chapel there also,—‘the parish chapel, . . . the said new chapel of St. Mary’.

¹ *Somerset Record Society*, xxxix, *Collectanea*, i, 207.

² No. 275.

³ *Somerset Mediaeval Wills*, i, 87.

⁴ *Cartulary*, xli.

⁵ *Ib.* 312.

⁶ *Ib.* ii, 98.

⁷ *Ib.* 129.

in 1516 throws more light on the last, and seems conclusive on the whole matter.¹ For she wishes to be buried in the 'under parishe church of Bruton before the awter of our blissid Ladie ther', and leaves money to the under parish church of Bruton 'for the newe bylding of parcell of the southe yle there' and to the fraternity of our Lady in the said church. We conclude from this that the 'under parish church' is the existing crypt, and that either the south side of it had to be rebuilt at the time, perhaps, to make it suitable for a new lady chapel, or else that it was intended to add an outer aisle on the low level.

Further evidence of two distinct structures is provided by the direction of John Fitzjames in his will of 1510 that he is to be buried in the nave of the priory church of the Blessed Mary of Bruton in a certain arch on the west side of the holy water stoup there.²

As the existing nave, which is complete, contains nothing that corresponds to this, the nave of the priory church which contained it must have been a different building. Thus there must have been two distinct churches and not a single building divided between the canons and the parish.

We may therefore conclude that the arrangement at Bruton was the same as at Keynsham or Muchelney—to mention two local examples only—and that the canons' church was a building of considerable size which has now disappeared. It seems to have stood south-east of the parish church, but its exact site is unknown.

STRUCTURAL HISTORY

The crypt already referred to is the earliest part of the present building. It consists of three bays and has quadripartite vaulting supported by segmental arches simply chamfered, springing from two octagonal pillars on the central east and west axis of the building. There are windows, formerly opening to the churchyard, but now blocked, in each bay of the east and side walls, save the westmost bay of the north side which is occupied by a newel staircase. Another entrance for burial purposes, now covered by seats in the nave, was made

¹ *Ib.* 190.

² *Ib.* 143.

at a later period in the south part of the west wall leading down from the nave of the Church above. There is no trace of altars or other fittings and the architectural details are of the plainest, but it is clear from the wills already quoted that early in the sixteenth century there was a lady chapel here, if not another chapel as well, and that the crypt was called 'the under parish church'. The date is probably early in the fourteenth century. Its north wall is in line with the north wall of the chancel; its south wall is well inside the south wall of the chancel; it does not extend as far east as the altar rails, but it extends westwards beneath the first bay of the nave, the present floor of which has been made to slope upwards from the west end, so as to clear the top of the crypt without a step.

The original nave, to which a new chancel, whereof this crypt formed the foundation, was added in the fourteenth century, may well have been Norman. At a later period, probably towards the end of the fourteenth century, a north aisle was added to the nave and a north tower and porch built outside the eastmost bay but one, in much the position that we see towers in neighbouring churches that escaped enlargement in the later Perpendicular period.¹

In the fifteenth century an extensive rebuilding of the nave took place. For some reason which it is hard to determine now, but probably because of difficulty about land to the westward, the very unusual course was adopted of encroaching on the chancel, the western part of which was pulled down to give space for the eastern bay of the new structural nave. We have in Somerset some fairly striking instances of small early chancels remaining after the parishioners had erected great and stately naves, as at Batcombe, Shepton Mallet or Weston Zoyland. But the short stump of a chancel that remained here must have been an extreme instance of this. It was indeed too short for a chancel, so the ceremonial division remained where it was before, and the screen crossed the church so as to cut off the last bay of the new structural nave.

This new fifteenth-century nave was wider than the old nave; it had its centre south of the old centre, and two equal aisles of

¹ *e.g.* Shepton Montague, South Brewham, Cucklington, Templecombe, where the tower-porches are on the south side for convenience of access.

five bays. It was evidently intended to rebuild the chancel to correspond, but as we shall see presently, this was never carried out. Meanwhile a rood screen and loft were erected or reconstructed in the old place, cutting off the eastern bay of the new nave, containing the clergy stalls in the west part of the chancel and flanked by a chapel within the screen at the east ends of the new aisles. The remains of the two-rood-loft staircases are still to be seen in the aisle walls. All this may have been due to Richard of Bruton, either before his death in 1417 or in consequence of his bequests¹: the Bruton rebus on the battlements of the north aisle may be an indication, though in their present form these carvings are much later in date.

The next stage in the development of the Church was probably the building of the great west tower; the west walls of the aisles seem to have been broken to allow the tower to be built between them. It seems clear, therefore, that the tower is subsequent to the west walls of the aisles.

Then came the reconstruction of the nave and aisle roofs with the building of the clerestory. First, probably was built the roof of the north aisle with the plain embattled parapet which has near the east end the monogram W. G. of William Gilbert, Prior of Bruton 1494 and Abbot 1511–1533, with a shield of Richard Fitzjames, as Bishop of London 1506–1522, whose home was at Redlynch, only two miles from Bruton. Heraldically this shield is most abnormal: instead of the mitre surmounting it, the mitre is actually upon the chief of the shield above the cross swords of London on the dexter side; the dolphin of Fitzjames is on the sinister. This fixes the date of this work as after 1506. The rebus of Bruton, BRV over a tun, further west, is clearly of this period, although it may commemorate a benefaction of about a century earlier by Richard of Bruton.

Then came the great clerestory and nave roof, with the open-work parapets and the south aisle roof, all probably before 1522, because of the Fitzjames dolphin on two shields within.

It was probably at this time and not earlier that the present chancel arch was built, with a new rood-loft staircase on the

¹ But Bruton's will contains no benefactions to the actual fabric of the Church.

north side, in preparation for a rood-loft at the west end of a wider chancel which was never built.

An old view previous to 1743 shows that the eastern part of the little old fourteenth-century chancel remained. In that year Charles, second surviving son of William Lord Berkeley, of Stratton, built the present classical chancel, it is said in memory of his father, the same width as the nave and somewhat longer than the old chancel, thus completing the church as it stands to-day.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The chancel, built in 1743, is a very remarkable structure. Like most work of its period it has been undeservedly despised in modern times. To-day of course, when the narrower side of the Gothic revival is passing away, it is appreciated again. It is difficult to realise that when the rest of the Church was restored about 1866-70, plans were actually prepared for replacing it by a chancel of Victorian Gothic. The stately classical reredos with Italian detail in its plaster work which covers the blank east wall, and the rich vaulted ceiling, give a characteristically baroque appearance to the interior. But the round-headed windows, originally three on either side, retain the Gothic tradition of tracery and are each divided into two lights with semi-circular heads surmounted by a circular tracery light. They have their original ironwork and contemporary plain glazing, while each tracery circle contains armorial glass, mostly of earlier periods.

Externally the chancel is severely plain. There are no architectural features save the windows, and the rubble walls are surmounted by an open-work Gothic parapet in imitation of that on the nave.

The chancel retains most of its original fittings. There are panelled box-pews on either side, with an ample floor space in the centre, paved in black and white squares set lozenge-wise. There are two steps before the altar with a curved return on either side, and the mahogany altar-rails have delicately turned balusters.

In the angle between the chancel and the north aisle is a small vestry, covering the east window of the aisle in a very

unpleasing way. In its east wall is a window like the rest of the chancel windows. This was probably taken from the western part of the south wall of the chancel when the organ chamber was built. It is in the corresponding position on the south side and closes in the east end of the aisle in like manner. The vestry contains the entrance to the crypt staircase.

The nave, of five bays, has rubble walls, evidently intended to be covered with plaster externally as well as within. These were most improperly scraped at the restoration, but it is understood that the distinguished architect who has now been consulted about the Church has advised replacing the internal plaster. There are buttresses opposite each pillar of the arcade. The windows are all alike. They have three lights trefoiled; a transom crosses the tops of the lights; above the transom the tracery develops two trefoiled lights in each division; the mullions run up to the arch; between them in the centre is an elongated quatrefoil. This somewhat clumsy design is more reminiscent of some parts of the north than of Somerset, or indeed any part of the south of England, though something very like it is found in the belfry windows of the unusual tower of Norton St. Philip.

Save at the west ends of the aisles these windows have no labels: their rear arches are plainly chamfered.

The arcades have the usual Somerset proportions: the pillars are clustered, there being single hollows between the shafts. The capitals are moulded: the shafts have three small rolls at intervals, the top roll, which is deeply undercut runs all round the capital and entirely separates the hollow mouldings of the pillars from the arch-mouldings. These consist of a plain chamfer on the outer order and a double ogee on the inner—a combination which is unusual in this area. At the east end the arches rest on corbels, that on the south having some paterae in one of the hollows.

This work probably dates from late in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and it would look as if a master mason from the midlands or the north may have had some connection with it.

The small tower on the north side is probably a little earlier.

It has four stages, diagonal buttresses, a plain embattled parapet, small pinnacles at three corners, and a square staircase turret at the remaining, south-west, corner. Both inner and outer doorways have two recessed orders chamfered and may well be earlier still. Above the outer doorway is a plain stone tablet on which can be traced the outline of a rood, most probably trimmed off by Puritans in the seventeenth century. On either side of the ground storey is a square-headed two-light window with trefoiled heads to the lights. An intermediate stage, intended for a strong-room, is provided above the porch and below the first string-course. The belfry storey has windows of two lights trefoiled with a single trefoiled tracery light—a common form in such a position.

Opposite this tower, which occupies the centre of the north side, is a plain south doorway, which retains its original door with moulded stiles.

We now turn to the later work in the roofs and clerestory. This is of the normal mid-Somerset rich type of the later period.

The clerestory has unusually large, wide windows, of four lights with trefoiled ogee heads and three quatrefoils in the tracery,—except for the four-centred arch, reminiscent of a much earlier date. They are the biggest clerestory windows in Somerset, except those at St. Cuthbert's, Wells, which have definitely Perpendicular tracery. Between each window a moulded shaft runs up the wall to a grotesque figure on the string-course, supporting a pinnacle. The parapets here and on the south aisle wall have trefoiled triangle piercings, in the usual manner of the Mendip churches.

Internally, there is an elaborate niche between each window, flanked by narrow panelling and diminutive buttresses, and resting on an angel bracket on the line of the string-course. Below this is a semi-octagonal panelled shaft supported by an angel corbel. Above the niche a third angel corbel supports the wall-posts beneath the main roof trusses. The whole arrangement is exactly like that at Martock, save only that there is no continuity with the arcade below. The niches have been considerably restored; the figures in them date from the restoration and many of the angel corbels have been renewed.

The angels are vested in albs and appavelled amices and hold either scrolls or shields : the shields they carry on the cornice line immediately to the east of the doorways, i.e. over the third pillars from the west end, are charged with the Fitzjames dolphin.

The nave roof is one of the finest examples of the enriched king-post roof of mid-Somerset type. It is of fairly high pitch : there are massive tie-beams with two rows of paterae on hollow mouldings ; each king-post has an angel on each side at the foot ; curved struts run from part way up the king-post to join the main couples of the trusses, and above them is open tracery work. Between each main truss is an intermediate one with arched braces and a central pendant terminating in a large boss. There are three massive purlins, one in the centre and one on either side, and subsidiary ribs with bosses at the intersections divide each half bay into twenty-four small panels on each side. The cornice is richly moulded and ornamented with paterae, and there is an angel with outstretched wings at the springing of each intermediate truss. The roof is almost exactly similar to that at Weston Zoyland. There is some colour and gilding on the eastmost tie-beam.

The aisle roofs are of low pitch, with tie-beams supported by brackets on short wall-posts, each standing on a carved stone corbel : in many cases these have been renewed at the restoration. The roofs are richly panelled throughout, the surfaces being divided by purlins and braces and small secondary ribs in the usual way, with sixty-four panels to each bay. Over the eastmost bay, east of where the screen used to be, each panel is enriched with a quatrefoil enclosing a leaf ornament. On the north side over the altar some of these bear shields with the instruments of our Lord's Passion, suggesting that here was the altar of the Five Wounds. In the next bay westward on the north side are remains of colour and gilding, the plain panels having originally been coloured alternately red and blue. Here, on the north side, are remains of a wall-plate with a painted inscription. Mr. Carpenter records the words **SANCTA CATHERINA VIRGINIS** ∞ **ORA P(RO) NOBIS** as remaining ; the first two words are not visible now. Obviously there were parts here of a much longer inscription, indicating that the chapel of

St. Katharine was on the west side of the screen at this point, having evidently occupied the east end of the north aisle before the enlargement of the nave eastwards.

In the corresponding position in the south aisle, attached to the roof on the side next the arcade, there is a tester, or series of flat-traceried panels, evidently in connection with a monument below, now destroyed. This monument probably took the form of two altar-tombs, in line with each other, so as not to take up too much space in the chapel; hence the long, narrow form of the tester.

The eastern bay of the south aisle has an enriched roof of similar character to that on the north side. The central boss has a shield painted with the Berkeley arms, which are also carried by an angel in the cornice on the north side. On each wall-plate are also two shields painted with M. and B., the initials of Maurice Berkeley. From this we gather that this chapel was taken possession of by the Berkeleys when they came into the monastic property after the suppression. In the wall at the east end of the south side the cinquefoil-headed piscina of this chapel still exists.

The tower belongs to the latter part of the fifteenth century. It is among Somerset towers of the first rank, though it is about twelfth in point of height. Of East Mendip type, it is a little larger than Shepton Mallet, not quite as large as Mells, but bigger than Leigh. Its proportions are remarkably well balanced and the whole effect is enhanced by the striking situation of the Church. It is in four stages, or three on the west side, as the west window projects into the second stage, the string-course being carried round its head. The doorway has an outer square head with a label: the spandrels are carved with foliage. The west window is in six trefoiled lights with a transom and a large central mullion forking to the arch: the tracery is in single panels. Beneath the transom the lights have rounded heads: at the top of the window the heads are ogee-shaped. The side tracery panels are trefoiled below, cinquefoiled above: the central panel is cinquefoiled. This tracery is remarkable. It is unlike any other west window in a rich Somerset tower save only to some extent the west window of Wrington. The top is surmounted by a niche and flanked

by two others. In the next stage, and in the north and south second stages, there are two-light windows with deep reveals and labels above and below : on the west side there are flanking niches.

The double buttresses terminate with tall pinnacles on belfry level, between which angle buttresses arise and terminate in the tall single pinnacles above the parapet.

The belfry has three windows of two lights in each face except the north, the eastern part of which is occupied by the semi-octagonal staircase turret ; here a single window is flanked by a narrow panel between pinnacled shafts. There are pinnacled shafts between all the belfry windows, which are filled with secondary tracery of the usual Somerset type. The parapet has two rows of enrichment beneath the merlons of the battlements : the upper row is pierced, but the merlons are not pierced. The string-course has two gargoyles on each side, but none at the corners. The staircase turret is clear of the N.E. buttresses and finishes in line with the tops of the battlements.

The arch leading into the Church has deep mouldings but no capitals. The fan vaulting is modern.

There seems to have been an extensive renewal of wood-work early in the seventeenth century. Many seat-ends with moulded and arched panels and semicircular projecting tops are of that period. They may be compared with those at Mere, just over the Wiltshire border. The pulpit has panels of the same type, but seems to have been reconstructed : the stone base is modern.

Across the tower is a screen dated 1620, with very beautiful doors in the centre, in a round-headed arch with rich carving and foliage in the spandrels almost in the Gothic manner. This seems to have been moved from the chancel. On either side are small circular pillars with running floral devices over them. Above is a richly carved cornice, very reminiscent of the medieval tradition, which has in the centre a panel carved with the following inscription :

I O H N · S A M P S O N ·
H · I · C H V R C H · W A R D I
1 6 2 0

In the lower part are worked up some narrow panels from a

fifteenth-century screen with cinquefoiled heads and quatrefoils on the angles, which suggest that the late medieval rood-screen was probably of the type represented at Queen Camel, Mere and High Ham, no doubt of great height with transomed fenestrations.

There are remains of fifteenth-century stained glass borders in the two eastmost clerestory windows on the north side.

The ancient heraldic glass in the chancel is of three periods and consists of the arms of the Berkeley family and their alliances on shields with wreaths or mantling. Those in the vestry and the westmost window on the north side appear to be of the sixteenth century. That in the next or middle window on the north side is probably of the same date as the chancel. The rest are of the seventeenth century.

Some work was done in the Church fairly early in the Gothic revival period. It was reseated in 1842: two clumsy sanctuary chairs were provided in 1844 in which seventeenth-century panels were worked up. In 1847, £16 was paid for a new font, and a cover was added the following year, when the tenor bell was recast.

A general restoration was carried out soon after 1866 under Slater and Carpenter, when the nave was refloored with tiles, most of the north arcade and clerestory were rebuilt with the original materials, figures were placed in the clerestory niches and much decayed stone was renewed. Unfortunately the plaster was removed from the internal walls of nave and aisles.

In 1908 it was found that cracks had developed in the corners of the tower in consequence of defective bell hanging. These were repaired under Mr. C. E. Ponting, and the bells were rehung by Llewellyns & James of Bristol. In 1930 the tenor bell was recast by Taylor of Loughborough.

ORNAMENTS AND FITTINGS

The Church possesses four short strips of late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century vestments of blue and red velvet embroidered with water flowers and other devices in the usual manner of the period. One device appears to be the monogram W G=William Gilbert, as on the battlements. Very probably

these were at one time used as an altar frontal. The embroidery is framed and hung at the west end of the nave.

Beneath are preserved two chained books, the *Paraphrase of Erasmus* and Jewel's *Apology*. There were also at one time Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* and Wright's *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*. These now seem to be lost.

There is a large and massive oak chest of thirteenth-century type, but without carving. It is 7 ft. long, by 23 in. wide, by 2 ft. 6 in. high.

The existence of an organ here in the first half of the seventeenth century is shown by the following title of a sermon by Humphrey Sydenham, printed in 1637 :

'The well-tuned Cymball is a Vindication of the moderne harmony of Ornaments in our Churches, against the Murmurings of their discontented opposers. A sermon preacht at the Dedication of an Organ lately sett up at Bruton in Sommerset.'

In 1831 an altar frontal of crimson velvet cloth with bullion fringe, and a crimson cloth to cover the table, were bought for £17 4s. 6d.

The plate is all of the eighteenth century. It is described by the late Prebendary Bates Harbin in vol. xliii of our *Proceedings* (1897), pp. 189-191. It includes an exceedingly beautiful pair of silver altar candlesticks 13½ in. high, inscribed, *The gift of Mr. John Gilbert, Brewton Church, 1744*. A hanging chandelier formerly existed, given by Richard Wood, who gave some of the plate in 1744.

The 4th bell is of exceptional interest. It is inscribed :—

sancta maria ora p nobis

[below this] 1528

[on waist]

Est stephanus [shield] primus lapidatus graçia plenus

The lettering is Gothic, the initial E being a crowned lombardic capital. The shield is charged with a dolphin beneath the letters WG, and there are two stamps, one of a dolphin, the other a plant. The lower inscription is in larger lettering

than the upper. WG of course stands for William Gilbert, last prior and first and only abbot, 1495 to 1532. Mr. H. B. Walters, who has made a complete revision of Ellacombe's *Church Bells of Somerset*, which unfortunately is not yet published, writes:—

‘The lettering and stamps do not resemble those on any other bell, and I am inclined to think that this, like Great Peter of Gloucester, is an instance of monastic founding. It is certainly not from the Bristol or any other medieval foundry within range, still less from London. The old tenor, inscribed *Sancte clemens ora pro nobis*, recast in 1848, may have been of similar type, but I am not sure, as a big bell was given by John Henton about 1450–60 (*S. & D. Notes and Queries*, iii, 88.)

Two fragments of the square font of a Norman form, now in the Church, were discovered in the vicarage garden.

MONUMENTS

A large altar tomb, the sides and ends of which are boldly carved with quatrefoils enclosing shields stands between nave and south aisle near the west end. It is said to have been removed about 1820 from the north-west corner of the Church and re-erected in the churchyard. In 1909 it was brought back into the Church and placed in its present position. It has been thought to be the tomb of William Gilbert, prior of Bruton 1494, abbot from 1511 till his death in 1533, a co-founder of Bruton School with John and Richard Fitzjames and John Edmunds. But as the character of the ornamentation belongs to about a century earlier than Gilbert's time, this identification can scarcely be upheld.

By his will¹ in 1417 Richard of Bruton, Canon and Chancellor of Wells Cathedral and Archdeacon of Middlesex, a high ecclesiastic of great wealth, left numerous benefactions here and elsewhere. He directed that his body be buried in the chancel of the parish church of Bruton with an effigy, and he founded a chantry at the high altar. Reasons have been given for attributing the great reconstruction of the nave to his

¹ The will and codicil are given *in toto* in *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xvi, 87–98

influence. If we recall the small size and proportions of the chancel before that, we shall conclude that his monument must have been set up on the north side of the high altar. There would have scarcely been room anywhere else. This is exactly the place now occupied by the elaborate monument to Sir Maurice Berkeley and his wives. Richard of Bruton's monument must have been removed to make way for it, if this was the case. Now Richard of Bruton had been vicar of Minehead (1401-1406), a church appropriated to the Priory of Bruton since 1237. He was also a benefactor to Minehead, and there is reason to think that Minehead Church was largely rebuilt in his time and that he gave the splendid font there, on which a kneeling donor is represented in gown and hood. On the north side of the high altar of Minehead is just such a monument as would correspond to what Richard of Bruton would have had here. The magnificent altar-tomb and canopy are placed in front of an arch and have no back : they were evidently made for another position, against a wall. The effigy is of Bruton's period and represents a priest in eucharistic vestments, with the fur almuce of a dignitary showing inside the amice apparel at the neck. The tradition in Minehead was that it represented Henry de Braeton, an ecclesiastic of much earlier days who was buried in Exeter Cathedral and had no connection with Minehead. The probability is that Braeton was a late false assimilation from Bruton, and that when the Berkeleys turned his monument out of Bruton, the Minehead people secured it on account of what he did for them in the previous century. Richard Fitzjames and William Gilbert also held the living of Minehead before they became bishop and prior respectively.

The Berkeley monument remains where it was before the chancel was rebuilt in 1743. It consists of a deep recess in the wall on the raised base of which lie the effigies¹ of Sir Maurice Berkeley, who died in 1580, and his two wives Katharine Blount daughter of William Lord Mountjoy, who died in 1559 and Elizabeth Sands who died in 1585. He was the second son of Sir Richard Berkeley of Stoke Gifford and obtained the Abbey of Bruton after the dissolution. The monument is faced

¹ These effigies are described by Dr. Fryer in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* lxxvii, 30-39.

by a double arch of early renaissance design and is a remarkably beautiful and restrained piece of Elizabethan work in Bath oolite.

On the south wall of the chancel is a seventeenth-century mural monument of no small artistic importance : it has been attributed to Hubert Le Sueur. Mr. Geoffrey Webb in some Notes on Hubert Le Sueur, Part II, in the *Burlington Magazine*, lii, 88, writes, in regard to this monument :

‘The stone-work of the monument has distinct affinities with such works as the Cottington and Richardson tombs [in Westminster Abbey which are attributed to Le Sueur], but the applied bronze ornaments are curious and disturbing. That with the inscription is almost certainly a perfunctory local work. It seems probable that at the rebuilding of the chancel in 1743 the work suffered a considerable renovation. The bust itself suggests a lively portrait, the scamping of the lace collar, and to a less extent the hair, are unlike Le Sueur, but may be accounted for by their comparative invisibility so high up on the wall. The above description does not do this work justice. The effect is fine and impressive. The “scamping” is only noted as a trait uncharacteristic of Le Sueur. The interest is concentrated in the face and the general formal relations with the hair and shoulders. In spite of these difficulties I should be inclined to attribute this work to Le Sueur, if the much more markedly Italian style of Fanelli is the alternative.’

It consists of a black marble frame with an oval recess containing a gilt bronze bust of William Godolphin. Above is his shield surmounted by the family crest ; below is a gilt bronze or brass cartouche bearing the following inscription in large and small capitals, here reproduced in capitals and lower-case letters respectively :

To the memory of Mr. William Godolphin, (third son to Sr William Godolphin of / Godolphin in Cornwall) who after he had liv'd to be a chiefe ornament to his family & / comfort to his friends by his many vertues & good life piously resign'd his spirit to / Almighty God in the yeare of his age the 28 and in the yeare / of our Lord 1636, and lyes here interred : /

At non infleti iacebitis Charissimi cineres, nec animis nostris vnquam excidet / amantissimi fratris svavissima simvl et acerba memoria: habebimvs semper ante / ocvlos modestissimi vultvs Imaginem, manebvnt infixi cordibvs mores, Ivdicv̄ vltra / annos matvrvm, tranqvilli pectoris fortitvdo verborvm certissima fides, totivs / vitae lenitas, simvl et severitas, nvlly vnquam gravis erat, nvlly non amabilis, svpra / tvrpitvdinem qvalemcvnq; elatvs, et qvamvis Ivvenis, reverentia vbiq; except⁹. / nobis avtem intimis affectibvs proseqvendis, / qvamdiv hic manebimvs: / Haec, meritissimo fratri, moestissimi fratres et soror / posvimvs.

On the north wall of the chancel are two mural tablets of later date which call for mention, viz., to Captain William Berkeley, Commander of H.M.S. *Tyger*, buried at sea 1733, and to William Berkeley, Lord Stratton, 1741. On the south wall is one to John Donne, 1782. The inscriptions are given by Collinson.

SOME HISTORICAL NOTES

This is not the place to recount what is known of the history of the monastery. That will be found in the preface to the *Cartulary of Bruton* in vol. viii of the *Somerset Record Society*.

But one or two points may be mentioned.

The monastery of Augustinian Canons founded here by William de Mohun in 1142 took the place of a small Benedictine house which went back to Saxon times. It is recorded that St. Aldhelm brought from Rome a white marble altar 1½ ft. thick, 4 ft. long and three 'palms' broad, with a projecting lip and crosses beautifully worked round the edge. This he is said to have given to King Ine who placed it in the Church of St. Mary, Bruton. The later monastic church was dedicated in the name of St. Mary; it contained an altar of St. Aldhelm in the nave. Hence we may conclude that it was the successor of this Saxon church. It is said that there were two Saxon churches here: the parish church is probably the successor of the other, that of SS. Peter and Paul.¹ It is strange

¹ There is possibly some evidence for this in the will of Sir William of Montacute made at Bordeaux in 1319, bequeathing his body to be buried in
(continued overleaf)

that this dedication should have been lost and that the parish church also was St. Mary's, and it almost looks as if the existing church of St. Mary must have been the monastic church. But it was not so, for reasons already given, and we have to assume a change of dedication during the medieval period. In 1311 the parish church is spoken of as within the enclosure, *i.e.* of the monastery great wall. From documents 56 and 57 in the *Bruton Cartulary* it is clear that the Church was appropriated to the monastery before 1166. Dr. Rose Graham has failed to find a single institution to Bruton in the episcopal registers. In the *Taxation* of Pope Nicholas it appears as 'Ecclesia de Bruton cum capellis'; it is 'rectoria cum capellis' in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, while the grant of Sir Maurice Berkeley after the dissolution is subject to the exception of £20 a year for the stipends of five chaplains in the church of Bruton and the chapels of Brewham, Pitcombe, Redlynch and Wyke. In 1452 Bishop Bekyngton dispensed with a former injunction so far as to allow the prior to employ canons in serving the parish church of Bruton and its chapels annexed.

The Abbey of Bruton is said to have possessed a girdle of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In a MS. in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is a curious account, written from 'St. Austyne's without Bristowe' by Richard Hayton, one of the Commissioners to Thomas Cromwell, the Visitor-General, which states that amongst other things transmitted to him was this Bruton girdle. The MS. says (*i.a.*) 'By this bringer, my servant, I send you reliques'; after naming many, he proceeds, 'alsoe Our Lady's girdell of Bruton, red silke, which is a solemn relique sent to women travelling, which shall not miscarry in partu'.

This may possibly explain why special honour was paid to the blessed Virgin Mary in Bruton in medieval times which we can trace in the dedication of the parish church, and the existence of a lady chapel both there and in the monastic church.

the Church of SS Peter and Paul at Bruton ('Bruton and Montacute Cartularies,' *Som. Record Soc.*, viii, xxiii). But a mistake is quite possible in a will made at a distance, though it is also possible that a change of dedication was made after this period and before the date of the documents which give the dedication as St. Mary's.