

Ditchheat Church.

Mr. E. BUCKLE said :—This is a cruciform Church, with central tower; with aisles to the nave, and a large south porch, but no north door. The lower part of the tower is Norman, and with its massive piers and small arch openings it forms a strong barrier between the nave and the chancel. The arches are of an irregular horse-shoe form, which does not seem to be wholly due to settlement, and which gives them a curious air of having been hewn out of the solid walls. Externally a pilaster buttress remains at one angle of the tower, and small lancet windows on at least two sides, showing that the whole height of the early tower still stands, though now surmounted by a Perpendicular belfry and almost buried amongst the roofs of the great Church which has grown up around it.

The south transept and the lower part of the chancel date from the 13th century, and the windows in the chancel are beautiful specimens of geometrical tracery, of a character rare in this county but presenting a considerable resemblance to some of the work at Tintern, and they are further adorned by boldly foliated arches on the inner wall-face.

Until the 15th century the four limbs of the Church must each have had comparatively low side walls, and have been covered with high pitched roofs, abutting upon a tower which did not rise greatly above the ridges of the roof. But at this period the usual enlargement and heightening of the Church took place. The nave was entirely rebuilt, with aisles, clerestory, and flat oak roofs of the usual type. The beams of the nave roof spring from boldly carved angel corbels, which display some originality of treatment; one angel unclothed, except in feathers, holds a mitre; others are also feathered, but represented in the customary alb; one wears a cope; while another (perhaps S. Raphael) supports two children. Two of the corbels in the south aisle should also be noticed; these are opposite the doorway, and they represent a pack and a wheel

—possibly indications of the trade guilds which furnished funds. The stair to the rood-loft is curiously planned; it begins as a straight stair outside the north wall of the aisle, it is then carried on a stone arch across the aisle into the tower, from the west wall of which a door opened on to the loft; the same stair thus serves both rood-loft and tower. The battlement round the nave roof outside also deserves notice, as it has but one crenelle to each bay.

The tower was raised by the addition of a belfry storey. On the west face are niches, with images of S. Mary Magdalene (to whom the Church is dedicated) and S. John Baptist. (*Qy.* Was there an altar dedicated to him in one of the aisles?) Massive diagonal flying buttresses were added at the two east angles of the tower to support the additional weight above; and the space between the foot of the buttress and the tower pier was in each case utilised to provide a large squint. The opening on the north side was subsequently cut down to the floor level to form a passage way, but the southern one seems from the first to have been intended to serve both purposes. The space under the tower was covered with a lierne vault, containing many ribs and bosses.

The walls of the chancel were raised to about the same height as those of the nave, but the existing windows were not interfered with, and another range of windows was inserted above them, making the chancel look as though it was a two-storeyed building. On the parapet outside are the following coats of arms:—

1. *A chevron between three leopards' faces.* STILLINGTON, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1466-91.

2. The monogram *IS.* JOHN SELWOOD, Abbot of Glastonbury, 1457-93. The Abbey held the manor and the advowson. This monogram occurs twice; in one case inverted, probably by a mason's blunder.

3. *A chevron between three guns.* GUNTHORP, rector of Ditcheat, 1465-98. He appears to have been re-instituted in

1473.⁶ The coat on Gunthorp's tomb in Wells is *within a border engrailed*, which is here omitted.

4. Much damaged, apparently, *a saltire between in dexter two keys, and in sinister a sword, both fesswise*. This would be the DEANERY OF WELLS, if the keys and sword were disposed vertically, instead of horizontally, and this was probably the meaning of the coat. Gunthorp was Dean of Wells, 1473-91.

These arms fix the date of the alteration to the chancel to the period 1473-91.

A similar alteration was made to the chancel of Pilton Church at the same period. The manor of Pilton belonged to Glastonbury, but the rectory was appropriated to the Precentor of Wells, and the chancel was raised by Overay, Precentor 1471-93. Another case of a double range of windows occurs at Kewstoke, on the north side of the nave.

The font is of the fifteenth century, the pulpit and reading desk are of Jacobean woodwork, adapted to this purpose when the Leir family pew was lately removed from the north aisle. The paint on the ceiling over the rood-loft is a restoration of old paint. In the south transept is a fine series of lias grave-stones, commemorating the Dawe family. In the north aisle is a board decorated with the elaborate quarterings of Robert Hopton of Wytham, who died in 1610.

In the porch is the sculptured head of a stone cross. On the face is the Crucifixion, with S. Mary and S. John; on the back, the Virgin and Child. The two ends are much battered, but they seem intended to represent S. Mary Magdalene and S. Nicholas.

In answer to the Rev. J. A. BENNETT, the Rev. Preb. THRING said there was formerly a Jacobean screen in the Church.—The Members then left for

Hornblotton Church.

The drive to Hornblotton was not pleasant, for the party

⁶ See Weaver's *Incumbents*.

arrived almost drenched. At the Church, the Rector, the Rev. Prebendary THRING, showed them what was remaining of the old Church (part of the old tower only), and explained that it was past restoration, so he had it pulled down, and built the new Church adjoining. He next alluded to the Goldfinch family, Mr. Goldfinch having been, at one time, Lord of the Manor. Mr. Thring afterwards conducted the Members over the new Church, which he said was designed and decorated by Jackson. The Church is dedicated to St. Peter, and contains the old font.

The Members next proceeded to the rectory, where Mr. and Mrs. THRING kindly entertained them, and afterwards accompanied them to

Alford Church,

the principal features of which he explained.

As the weather did not permit of walking across the fields to see

Bolter's Bridge,

The Rev. Prebendary THRING read extracts from a letter of Mr. Dickinson, on this bridge, as follows:—"The authority for 'Bolter's Bridge,' . . . depends on the boundaries of Ditchat, given in the Glastonbury Chartularies. . . . In them 'Bolam tree' is mentioned where the bridge now is; the *am* is a case, dative, I think, and the word in the nominative would be 'Bol-tre.' I should like the antiquaries to explain 'Bol,'⁷ and also make out the date of the bridge. . . .

⁷ *Bolamtre* occurs in the Index to Kemble's Charters, but the reference, 253, is wrong. Prof. Skeat says—"Bolam is hardly a possible form in A.S.; it is almost certainly an error for *Bolan*—*an* is both gen. and dat. from nom. *Bola*; c.f. *Bollan-éa* in Chichester Charter, A.D. 725."

Bola is a pr. name in A.S. See "*bofa*, aldréd *bola*." Folkestone Charter, A.D. 824. (Sweet's *Oldest English Text*, p. 450.) Prof. Skeat says—"I think that *Bola's tree* is a possible solution, . . . and that is something, but as a rule nothing is known about place names. No decent book on the subject exists, . . . all existing books on this subject are utterly worthless, and worse, because full of impossible nonsense." We find *bolas tree* whence *bullace* in M.E., but as it was unknown till the fourteenth century, when it came from French *beloche*, that form is too late to have given a name to Bolter's Bridge.—Origin of O.F. *beloche* is unknown. Ed.

It is very picturesque; round arches and pointed confused. . . . A pointed arch like this is likely to be late. . . . Toothill bridge, between Barton and Baltonsborough, is round.”

The Rev. J. A. BENNETT said that the pack-horse road, of which there are still a few of the original side stones remaining, as well as the bridge, were made by the monks of Glastonbury as a communication between their two properties of Glastonbury and Bruton.

From Alford Church the party returned to Castle Cary, arriving at 6.30, in time for the Annual Dinner, which took place at the George Hotel.

The Evening Meeting

was held in the Town Hall at 8 o'clock. The PRESIDENT in the Chair. There was a large attendance.

English Serfdom.

Bishop HOBHOUSE said—I hold in my hand two deeds of manumission, which I think will interest the audience. They belong to Mr. Rogers of Yarlinton. There is nothing uncommon in them, there are many hundreds of them extant, still many people are not acquainted with them. The lord of every manor had attached to that manor certain bondmen, who went by the name of serfs and naifs—*nativi* in Latin documents. That is to mark the fact that they were born in a state of bondage; and it was in the power of the lord of the manor to set them entirely free, either of his own free will, or for money. It was not at all uncommon for money to be offered for the purchase of emancipation. Whether money was offered in this case I do not know, because it is not stated. In many cases it is stated. In the chapter documents of Wells the price can be traced. In the fourteenth century, emancipation was extremely common.

In the diocesan registers at Wells, cases of emancipation are extremely common indeed; and the causes for emancipation are often stated. In many cases the bishop evidently had personal knowledge of the serf about to be emancipated—had seen in him qualities which distinguished him from among his fellows. The registers, from A.D. 1309 to 1329, show that the bishop emancipated serfs with the expressed intention of educating them for holy orders. When a serf was so emancipated, the bishop proceeded at once to confer the tonsure upon him, making himself responsible for the education of that youth, until he reached his destination. The manor to which these deeds apply, is the neighbouring manor, now called Wyke Champflower. The first is a deed of John Fitz James, of Red Lynch, lord of Wyke, and he gives liberty to John Amys. The other is from his widow, who had received, as her dowry, the manor of Wyke, and her deed is in favour of others of this same family of Amys. The condition of the bondman, legally, was one of absolute subjection to the lord of the manor; not only he himself personally belonged to the lord, but all his *sequelæ*—his whole following, meaning everything that belonged to him in life—his wife, his children, his cats, his dogs, everything that could follow him; he could not, in law, have anything of his own. His spiritual condition was something very much better, for in the Churchwarden's Accounts of the fifteenth century we get a picture of church-life, where it is made perfectly plain that the serf, whatever his legal condition, was treated, with regard to his spiritual condition, as one who had the same blessed hopes as those around him, and was treated as an equal in God's house. It was this treatment of serfs, in all spiritual things, that brought classes so much nearer together, and eventually abolished serfdom altogether. We must remember that serfdom was dying out by the inclinations of the people, and the bringing together of the classes, long before it was abolished by law. From 1349 onwards, the number of emancipations was so great that it was quite clear

the system was a dying-out system. The documents I hold in my hand are dated—the first, 1478; and the second, 1483.

On the Devolution of Domesday Estates in Somerset.

Bishop HOBHOUSE spoke to the following effect:—The map now exhibited on the walls of this room is a reduced copy of the map which I presented last year to the Society,⁸ representing the apportionment of the estates of the county by the Conqueror, as recorded in Domesday Book, 1086.

I now speak of the subsequent history of those estates during (roughly) the next two centuries.

It must be characterised as one of disintegration, affecting even the most stable tenures, such as those of the church.

The causes of disintegration were:—

1. Attainder, as the penalty of rebellion.

The disputed succession of the Conqueror's son greatly contributed to this. The large barony of Moretaine, of which Montacute was the head, and the large fief of the Bishop of Coutances, embracing a wide area in the neighbourhood of Bristol and Bath, were broken up before the end of the century, and re-granted in smaller holdings, often to sub-tenants, (*e.g.*, the Montagnes and Beauchamps,) thus creating a stock of knights' and squires' families.

2. The great estates of the church were confirmed to the prelates and abbots under a "Barony" tenure. This tenure obliged the holder to furnish an assessed number of knights to the King at each muster of the kingdom.

It was allowable to pay 'scutage' as a composition in lieu of knight's service, but the clerical landowners preferred the other course of creating a stock of knight's and squires upon their lands, and answering the King's call by sending the required number to his standard.

The great Glastonbury estate, and the bishop's estate, were

⁸ See *Proceedings*, 1889.

for this end spotted with knight's fees (supposed to be, loosely, four hides apiece), and with knights, who, as a condition of their holding, served in war for forty days at their own cost, fully equipped and followed by 'servientes' or squires. Disintegration of the estate was no necessary consequence of such an arrangement, but nevertheless it followed in the majority of cases. The hereditary principle was very prevalent, and moreover the feeling that a "tenant-right" was acquired by a holder who had improved his knight's fee, so that in many traceable instances, the man who was planted on a manor, merely for his usefulness to the Convent in war or peace, is seen to be the founder of a family, raised, step by step, to the freehold enjoyment of their sub-fief.

This process of sub-infeudation operated largely in this neighbourhood. In the Glastonbury manor of Batcombe, the estate of Spargrove was committed as a knight's fee to the family of Sansaver, who did homage for it at the Abbot's installation in 1189. In the course of the next century the Sansavers became independent knights, and their fief disappears from the abbey records, being probably held in capite of the Crown.

With more or less clearness, similar processes can be traced, detaching the manors of Alhampton, Hornblotton, Lamyat, Whatley, Downhead, Camerton, Pylle, Croscombe, Stowell, and on a still larger scale the Manor of Shepton Mallet. All these became, by steps of enfranchisement, independent of the great abbey, and are absent from the last valuation of the estates, viz., in 1536. On the Bishop's estate the same results of sub-infeudation are seen. Dinder, Wellesley, Knowle in Wookey, Churchill, Stowey in Chew Magna, all became seats of county families, having originally served as knight's fees.

3. *The lay Baronies* show the same processes. To begin near home, on this barony of Cary were quartered the families of Clevedon at Milton, and Stourton at Stourton, both becoming independent. At Redlynch a vassal family grew up, bearing

the name of Draycot, in the fourteenth century, and then merging, in the fifteenth, under the better known name of Fitzjames.

Bratton was first told off as a sub-fief for the maintenance of the 'dapifer' of Castle Cary, Gerard, who no doubt also did military service to the Lovells. There was a succession of "Gerards de Bratton," one of whom, in the twelfth century, endeavoured to give his small fief to Bruton Priory, but failed to obtain the consent of his Over-lord. By the failure of his issue, the manor reverted to the Lovells, and passed through them to the St. Maurs, whose name is now attached to it. In this case the usual course of disintegration was arrested.

On the great Barony of Mohun of Dunster, several families grew up. In our own neighbourhood, the family of Champflower, springing from a Norman follower of the first Mohun, was settled on the hamlet of Wyke in Bruton, to which it bequeathed its second name. It became, for some generations, a knightly family. In other parts of the Mohun Barony, the families of Bret, Punchardon, Pero, and Flory, have left a record of their hereditary holdings by attaching to the soil the surnames they brought from Normandy.

Another cause of disintegration I do not notice, because it operated also for the accumulation of estates—I mean the division of land among co-heiresses. I will only say, that in the neighbouring Barony of Cadbury, vested in the Newmarches in the twelfth century, so many manors were detached by marriage, as to reduce materially the importance of the fief.

4. The last cause of disintegration was a potent one, viz. :—gifts of land for endowment of church institutions. The Norman grantees of the soil were lavish founders of religious houses. At first they gave their newly-gotten English acres to their favourite convents in Normandy. As they became naturalized in England, they founded new houses in England, thus greatly swelling the ecclesiastical estates, and counterbalancing the effects of sub-infeudation.

A map of the county, representing the tenures in 1300 (the culminating point of land endowments given to the church), would help us to realize the amount thus given in Mortmain by the laity for religious purposes. The details are far too numerous to give on this occasion. I will express my hope that some one may be found to take in hand such a map. We should then be able to estimate the proportions of the lay and ecclesiastical estates which ruled till the great territorial revolution of the dissolution.

A County History.

The PRESIDENT asked them to consider the proposal which he ventured to make in his address that morning, that the Council should be asked at once to consider the feasibility of drawing up a scheme for making a systematic preparation for a proper county history. He said that he had received some interesting letters on the subject; one was a very important one from Mr. Maxwell Lyte, which he read to the Meeting, and in which Mr. Lyte set out at length his ideas upon the object and scope of the proposed county history, and expressed a strong opinion that no re-issue of Collinson "with additions and corrections," however numerous, would ever be satisfactory. With much more of great value, but which will be more suitable for consideration by those responsible for the work than for the pages of these *Proceedings*, Mr. Maxwell Lyte offered the following practical suggestions. These may well be brought under the notice of every one of the Members, in the hope that many will see amongst them one way at the least in which he or she may take an active part, and thus materially aid in the collection of valuable materials, to be afterwards properly arranged and digested:—

(a) "That tracings of the tithe maps, or at any rate complete lists of the field-names, be obtained from every parish. Etymological suggestions might be invited, but, if given, they should be kept distinct from the tracings or lists, which would

constitute the primary authority. These tracings or lists should be filed, or bound, for permanent preservation at Taunton Castle.

(b) "That copies be obtained of all epitaphs and inscriptions in every church, and of such epitaphs in churchyards as ought to be recorded. These copies made on paper of uniform size, should be filed, or bound, for permanent preservation at Taunton Castle.

(c) "That an alphabetical list be prepared of all Somerset families whose pedigrees are recorded in the *Heralds' Visitations*, and of those families which have become important since 1672, and that copies of this list be circulated among the parochial clergy, with a request that they will transcribe all entries concerning any of them which they may find in their respective Registers. These transcripts, made on paper of uniform size, should be filed, or bound, for permanent preservation at Taunton Castle.

(d) "That a series of printed questions be addressed to the parochial clergy concerning the fabrics of their respective churches. The answers, written upon the forms, like returns for the income tax or for the census, should be kept distinct from any longer statements which some clergymen or architects may feel disposed to make. The former should be filed, or bound, for permanent preservation at Taunton Castle."

He had also received a short letter from the Clerk of the Peace, Mr. Dunn, relating to the County Records, which were reported to be in order from 1646 to the present time.

The President concluded his remarks by proposing that the matter be referred to the Council of the Society, to draw up a scheme for ensuring during the next few years a systematic preparation of materials for a county history; especially in respect of parochial records, natural history, and folk lore. His uncle, Bishop Hobhouse, had also written upon the subject, but as he was present the better way would be for him to explain his letter himself.

Bishop HOBHOUSE said the object of his letter was a plea for delay as far as the documentary history of the county went. No doubt some parts of the county history could be well written at the present moment—such at the Roman, pre-Roman, and even Saxon times; but when they came to the documentary period there was a vast amount of labour to be gone through, so that it would be a cause for the greatest regret to all who were interested in the matter if the county history were hastily written. It would have been of the greatest regret to them if it had been written twenty years ago, for it would all have to have been re-written. He did not think, at the lowest computation, that ten years were too much for encountering the labour of ransacking the documents they knew of. He had given to one of the members a list of great stores of unransacked documents. He believed these raw materials were growing, but they were not nearly grown to their full extent, though they were in rapid process of growth; but he reckoned that it would be as much as ten years before the documentary evidence could be put in order, and therefore his plea was for time. But that did not at all militate against the proposal, on the contrary, it made it extremely desirable that they should begin to see their way about it. The work must be done by a small body of men, and he was fully in accord with the proposal to devolve the matter upon the Council of the Society, requesting them to take it into close consideration and put it into shape. He seconded the resolution as moved by the President.

The Rev. J. A. BENNETT said that he took an especial interest in the subject, as being the Secretary of the Record Society. He welcomed too Mr. Hobhouse's suggestion, and he knew from his intercourse with the Council that they too would enter into it willingly, and carry it out to the best of their ability. It struck him that it was not new machinery that was wanted; they had plenty of machinery in the county, but they wanted to infuse fresh life into it. The Record Society

was established for the very object of gathering materials for making a county history, and the only thing that they wanted was more life, more steam. He did not agree with Mr. Rogers' suggestion of lowering the subscription to the Record Society, though he did agree with him that they wanted more Members. Instead of £130 a year, they wanted £160; or if they could get £250 they would be able to print two good volumes a year, and in a very short time—five or six years—they would get all the most valuable and necessary documentary information for a future county history.

The Rev. G. E. SMITH was quite prepared to vote for the resolution, and said no doubt the Record Society was doing valuable work. He knew an instance where many valuable papers in the county were stored away in an old wine bin, and in a short time the rats and mice, and damp, would render them perfectly useless; but if the resolution submitted to the Society were carried, such documents would be rescued.

The PRESIDENT remarked that he did not want to create new machinery, but he did want to systematize what they had, so as to ensure that every district,—he could not say every parish, because he was afraid that would be impossible,—but that every district in the county should be overlooked by some competent and zealous person, who should be responsible, in a sense, so that no materials were lost. He was ready to formulate a scheme on these lines to be put before the Council. He thought they should have some general expressions from the rank and file of the Society.

The Rev. J. A. BENNETT, referring to several remarks made by the President, said he was afraid that the President had misunderstood him. He did not mean to throw cold water on the scheme, on the contrary; he agreed with it. What he meant was that new life should be infused into the present machinery.

Sir CHARLES HOBHOUSE next addressed the Meeting. He was a member of the Wiltshire Archæological Associa-

tion to which reference had been made that morning. What did the Record Society ask the Wiltshire Archæological Society to help them in? He had heard nothing as yet upon the subject of the Record Society, nor what was wanted from Wiltshire. If the Secretary would let them know more clearly what was wanted, perhaps they could assist. Sir Charles then proceeded, in a remarkably lucid and interesting address, to show how materials might be collected for the compilation of a county history, or the history of a parish, illustrating his remarks by several instances which came under his own knowledge.

The Rev. J. A. BENNETT replied to Sir Charles Hobhouse's speech, and

The PRESIDENT's resolution was then put to the Meeting and carried.

Dr. COOMBS gave an interesting address on the objects contained in the Local Museum.
