

Wednesday.

A large party left the *Squirrel* in breaks and carriages, and drove, *via* Whiteball, to

Burlescombe Church.

Mr. BUCKLE said in this interesting Church there was nothing of very early date, but many features were decidedly uncommon. The oldest objects were the tomb on the south side of the chancel; the lower part of the tower—about 1400; and the south-west window of the chancel. At first the building consisted simply of nave and chancel, without aisles—quite a small church—ending where the altar rails now are. About 1500 it was very much enlarged. He thought that first of all the south aisle was added and afterwards the north; and that at the time the north aisle was added, the chancel was extended one bay farther east. They found here, as at Bradford, a Somerset arcade on one side and a Devon arcade on the other. The south aisle had attached to its south end a porch, in a very curious position, well worth examining. In this porch was an old altar table. At the west end of the aisle were two large iron rings at the level of the capitals, one on each side, turned in opposite directions; the one on the south side hung down naturally, while that towards the nave

did not hang down but stuck out. He should be glad of a suggestion as to what those rings were intended for. They were clearly meant for work, and whatever chains passed through had much weight to carry. The east end of the chancel and the north aisle were built by the Ayshfords, whose name and arms were inherited by the President of the Society. On the north wall of the chancel was the founder's tomb. The paint on it was modern. All the rest of the work was of course ancient, and on a slab on the top was an inscription recording that Nicholas Ayshford and his two wives, who died 15 were buried The day of the month and the date of the year after fifteen were left blank. This proved that the tomb was erected during the life-time of Nicholas Ayshford. He probably built the tomb at the same time that he built the addition to the chancel. As the figures had never been filled in it seemed possible that he was never buried there. If he were buried there his son did not seem to have thought it worth while to finish the inscription. There was a tombstone in the floor of the north aisle, very much worn away, dating from about 1570, which appeared to be also to commemorate Nicholas Ayshford and his two wives; but it was doubtful if this was the same person. There were two Nicholas Ayshfords in succession, and he thought the one buried under this stone was the younger of the two.

The north aisle was clearly built for an Ayshford chapel. It was full of that family's heraldry. In the roof of the aisle and on the capitals of the arcade was a complete series of shields, commemorating the Ayshford alliances. Among the families represented were (besides Ayshford) Wadham of Knap, Francis of Combe Florey, Pawlett and Ferrers. The east end of that aisle seemed to have had the floor lowered considerably, for the piscina was far too high to be attainable from the present floor.

The chancel screen was out of its original position. Its proper place was across the two piers outside the present

chancel where the stove now stands; and they would notice how long the chancel was, compared with the nave, when the screen was in its original place.

There was a fine tower, plain, but very effective, and magnificently placed on the hill side. The lower part was altered in Jacobean times. There was a tablet with the dates 1638 and 1677, but there was nothing to show what these dates referred to. They were presumed to be the date of the tower alterations. The windows on the south side had Somerset tracery, and the south window of the chancel had the same tracery, apparently worked from recollection, for it was not accurately developed.

REV. PREBENDARY BULLER said there were five bells to the Church. All bore inscriptions. On the little bell were the words, "Follow me when I call;" and on the third bell, "Thomas Langdon new cast us five, 1638 A.D.

A chalice was exhibited, which was believed to be of pre-Reformation date, but inspection of the maker's and hall marks proves it to be Elizabethan of 1575.

MR. ELWORTHY said that in the Chantry Rolls of 37 Henry VIII. (1546), there appeared, "A chantry of cvjjs viii^d founded by the late prioress and convent of Canonleghe, to fynde a priest to pray for the sowle of one Aysheforde of Aysheforde in the parish church of Burlescom, out of the manor of Canonleghe, parcell of the possessions of the late priory of Canonleghe." This church, he said, always from its foundation belonged to the abbey of Canonsleigh. This particular chantry was most likely founded in satisfaction of great benefits received, and probably referred to the man whose tomb was in the chancel.

The next halt was at the

Westleigh Limestone Quarries.

At these well-known quarries the party became divided, but each party had the privilege of listening to an address—one

by Professor Boyd Dawkins, the other by Mr. Ussher. Professor Boyd Dawkins pointed out the fact that the Limestones of Westleigh were thrown into a series of folds by the gradual shrinkage of the earth as it contracted in the process of cooling. In consequence, too, of the shrinkage, certain stresses were set going, by which the rocks were broken along certain lines, commonly known under the name of faults. He then pointed out that the Westleigh limestone formed an island of Devonian rock which rose above the sea in which the New Red Sandstone of Wellington was an accumulation of sand banks. Those rocks, consolidating and compacting together, formed the well-known building stone of the district.

Mr. USSHER said that in these quarries they were looking on the bed face, originally the sea bottom at the time the rock was deposited. Those sea bottoms were elevated under a tremendous mass of sediment and subsequently twisted and contorted. If they could see them sideways they would see they were contorted in a series of sharp-pointed curves. It was important to know what horizons these measures occurred upon, in order that they may judge whether their prolongation eastward under those secondary rocks, would or would not preclude the chance of finding Coal. To show something of that he must enter briefly on the structure of the whole of Devonshire. Mr. Ussher here exhibited a plan. In North Devon, from Ilfracombe to Morthoe, the surface of the country was occupied by pre-carboniferous rocks, so that if they struck under them they could not have a chance of finding Coal. At Barnstaple, beds of the same age as these limestones cropped out immediately on the top of the Devonian rocks, and therefore far below Coal. As they approached Dartmoor, South Tawton, and other places, they had a re-appearance of this Limestone horizon in deposit form. At Morebath he had recognised it in a bed not thicker than his finger. Thus they would see that they had these Limestones on the north margin of their trough, at the base of the Carboniferous, and resting on the

Devonian ; and a prolongation of that margin of the trough of the lower beds, between the secondary rock, would certainly not give them the least chance of finding Coal. He did not think they had in Devonshire any rocks as modern as the Coal measures ; all the culm measures forming central Devon were of older date than Coal. The chance of obtaining Coal under the rocks was in the prolongation of this curve deepening eastward, supposing this type of carboniferous rocks to be maintained. Another point, and a technical one, was that in this occurrence of these Limestones they had proof that there was not very much chance of getting Coal at all in the secondary rocks, or under the secondary rocks, on the borders of these older rocks, between the English Channel and where they were standing, because the limestones were represented by a series of folds. This Westleigh limestone occurs at Holcombe Rogus, about one-and-a-half miles distant, and there are some beds at Ashbrittle. The same horizon was kept at the surface by a series of folds, and so long as that went on it was tantamount to a horizontal dip. As a consequence those folds must be taken into consideration, with the depth of the trough, in considering the prospects of Coal to the east of that area. He could not see the least chance of finding the trough deepening as they went eastward ; but of course there were no end of vicissitudes in geology, and if they went far enough they might have a deepening of the trough. Mr. Ussher also explained that Burlescombe Church stands on pebble beds under the sandstones, and that those pebble beds could be traced from Burlescombe to Budleigh Salterton.

From the quarries, the party walked to

Canonsleigh,

where a paper was read by Rev. T. C. TANNER. (*See Part II.*)

Mr. ELWORTHY said it should be borne in mind that Canonsleigh was first established as a Priory of Augustine canons, and that it only existed as such little more than one hundred years. Disputes arose, and they must have been very

acute, because Bishop Quivil, in the last two years of his life, visited this convent many times. There must have been grave disorders and irregularities which led to the severe measures he took. It was in 1284 that by some means he ousted these very irregular and extremely disobedient canons—not monks or friars—and put in a community of Augustine nuns. These were established, not under the Countess of Gloucester, but under a prioress, named Matilda de Tablere. The following year Bishop Quivil promoted the house to the rank of abbey; and Matilda, the Countess of Gloucester and Hertford, who had previously endowed the monastery with the manor of Syden-cote and a large sum of money, was made first abbess. The buildings which had been referred to by Mr. Tanner as the kitchen were undoubtedly the sanitary offices, and probably owed their preservation to their plainness.*

Mr. BUCKLE, standing within the site of the old convent, said this was all that remained of the priory originally founded for Augustinian canons, and subsequently used for canonesses. The Augustine canons arranged their buildings much in the same way as the Benedictines. Hexham, the best preserved of their houses, might be a Benedictine house as far as arrangement went. The dormitory formed the continuation of the transept—in this case the south transept—so that the canons or canonesses could go down direct from the dormitory to the church. Under the dormitory was the ordinary living room. Mr. Buckle also traced the probable site of the church; and after directing attention to the splendid mortar used in the building, he explained that the back buildings were put at queer angles simply to bring them over the stream. The existing buildings contained the garderobes which were always placed at the end of the dormitory block.

In answer to a question, Mr. BUCKLE said he did not believe in the mill wheel; and

* For further information as to Canonsleigh, see paper by *F. T. Elworthy*, in *Transactions of Devon Association*, vol. xxiv. (1892), pp. 359, *et sq.*

Mr. ELWORTHY asked where was the fall for water power?

A capital luncheon was provided at the "Ayshford Arms," and afterwards the party drove to

Holcombe Rogus Church.

Mr. BUCKLE said here again there was a Somerset arcade on the south, and a Devon arcade on the north. It was difficult to account for the reason why they got this difference; but it was probable that, situated as the people were, between two schools of masonry, it was sometimes convenient to employ a mason from Somerset, and on another occasion it was more convenient to employ one from Devon. Thus they had two styles mixed together in this district. Still, their being so commonly opposed to each other raised the idea that the people liked variety. In this case, he thought the Somerset arcade was the earlier. It had been altered in the western arch against the door, and there was no sign of alteration on the opposite side. The western arch of the Somerset arcade was different from any of the others. It seemed as if that arch had been taken down in connection with some alteration to the tower, and that when re-built they altered slightly the mouldings above. The screen originally went right across the church and through the spandrils above the main columns. The panel of the main columns on the outside of the screen was quite another pattern, and distinct from that on the inside. These two panels would never be seen at the same time when the screen stood there and divided them, and the more elaborate panelling was on the outside. There was some remnant of the old screen in position in the north aisle, and another piece in the arch on that side of the chancel. That no doubt had been moved there from the central part of the screen, or from the part which went across the southern aisle, and it was a very nice piece of work. The windows of the church were remarkable—one in the north aisle was of very curious design. The chancel window had that remarkable tracery which they found in the west

window of the tower at Wellington; the arches at the heads of the three centre lights were incomplete; instead of the two limbs of the arch meeting in the centre, it was broken away, and the two mullions started up again so as to form a small light standing above the principal one. The east window of the north aisle had the same thing. It was a very curious system of tracery, and it was difficult to understand the object of it, because he did not think anyone could consider it beautiful. The screen round two pews in the church was of interest, on account of the Flemish carving. It seemed as if a band of Flemish carvers had gone through the district, about 1530; but this carving was considerably later than that, because it had a decided Renaissance character about it. The figure sculpture at the top of the screen was worth examining. Most of the objects of this curious series were easily identified with scenes from Genesis, but others were obscure.

The lower part of the tower, earlier than the rest of the church, appeared to be 14th century work. The tower was exceedingly effective, and, like Burlescombe, it was quite plain, having none of the clusters of pinnacles frequently met with in Somerset.

There were some curious Jacobean tombs to the Bluetts in the chapel.

Mr. ELWORTHY said it might not be known that the living belonged in early times to the priory of Montacute, in Somersetshire. Another curious fact was that on that very day (August 17), 632 years ago, there was a vicar instituted in that church whose name was Adam of Kentisbeare. As to the name of Holcombe Rogus he considered Rogus must have come from a family, named Roges, for he found that in the year 1188 the church of Wynesford was given to Bishop Reginald of Bath* by Lady Alicia de Roges; and in 1410 a certain Christina Roges was sub-prioress of Canonsleigh, and

* See "Bishop Reginald," by Canon Church (*Archæologia*).



GREENHAM BARTON

signed a petition, with a large number of other Devonshire names, for the election of a new abbess. The crest of the Bluetts was the sign of the Squirrel Hotel, at Wellington.

Mr. SOMERS described the Bluett tombs in the chapel.

Mr. MONDAY read extracts from a will relating to the Bluetts and Portmans.

Owing to the recent death of the late owner, Mr. Rayer, Holcombe Court, a very noble and perfect specimen of a Tudor house, was not accessible to the Society.

From Holcombe the party drove to

Greenham Barton,

which was described as the house of the Bluetts before they went to Holcombe Court ; and it was said that anciently the owner of Greenham was, *ipso facto*, Lord of the Hundred of Milverton. Parts of this house, including the entrance arches and a window in the servants' apartments, were of the time of Richard II.—fourteenth century ; but there had been alterations, almost amounting to re-building, in the time of Henry VIII.

Mr. BUCKLE directed attention to the windows ; also to the to the magnificent fire-place in the hall, and said that in addition to the principal house there was, in the court-yard behind, what looked like a complete house in itself, as if it might have been the dwelling place of some dependent of the owner of the great house ; but whether that was so or not he could not say.

The next halt was at

Cothay,

locally known as Cothay Abbey—a name for which there is not the slightest pretext. This is one of the most interesting and least-altered of Early Tudor manor houses in West Somerset. The porch, the great hall, with its screen and gallery, its fire place, panelled dais, and with drawing room beyond, from

which is the usual winding stair leading to the ladies' apartments, are all intact. Save that the panelling is of Jacobean times, that part of the house remains, with the front door and ponderous lock, as it was first constructed. In the later part is a fine seventeenth-century chimney-piece, handsomely carved, and decorated with the arms of Every. As at Greenham, there is a detached building adjoining the main gateway—formerly a complete house—having a newel stair leading to an upper storey, and a picturesque bell turret. This, from its having a fire place on both stories, was probably the lodging of the porter.

A stone has been found here bearing the arms of Bluett, quartered with some others which cannot be determined.

The party then returned to Wellington, after enjoying a delightful excursion in perfect weather.