

Thursday : Excursion.

The morning was all that could be desired, and at the appointed time, 9.30, upwards of seventy departed in breaks and other conveyances, for

Worspring Priory.

Passing through Worle and Kewstoke, the party arrived at

Worspring at 11 o'clock. Having alighted in the outer enclosure, a halt was made at the entrance gate, where

Mr. ALLEN BARTLETT said that the first foundation of the Priory was in all probability in the year 1210. According to a letter written to the Bishop of Bath and Wells at that time, there appeared to have been a chapel or chantry on the site, and in this was buried Robert, grandfather of De Courtenay ; but no trace of it has been found, save and except a Norman capital, which was dug up some time since at a distance of some three hundred yards from the present building. This is now in the wall at the entrance gate. From a description given by an old farmer, however, in 1835 there would appear to have been some slight resemblance to a small nave and chancel, at a spot known as the Five Elms, where, underneath some stone slabs, a quantity of bones was discovered. This is all that is known of the original building. The shields which now ornament the entrance gate were supposed by Rutter to have been brought from the east end of the north aisle of the church, but country people informed him that both shields were brought from fields in the same line as that in which the capital had been discovered, and this was in a direct line to a landing place on the coast. From this it might be assumed, that in carrying away the carvings, some were accidentally left behind. The second church was of the 13th or 14th century. Mr. Bartlett then proceeded to direct attention to the exterior of the present building, pointing out that the west front had undergone great alteration — in fact, had been almost entirely destroyed. Above the west door there must have been a large window, in all probability surmounted by a crowned figure seated. On either side had also been figures under canopies, but they had become almost invisible. From what could be made of the outline, however, there was good reason to suppose that one figure represented St. Augustine, whilst the second was, perhaps, either the founder, or Thomas á Becket.

Mr. Bartlett then conducted the party to the southward and to the hall, which he fully described.

MR. PAULL gave general particulars as to the result of the excavations—as embodied in his paper of the previous evening. It was believed that after the suppression the buildings were used as a hospital.

MR. BARTLETT said there were frequent entries in the books of adjacent parishes of contributions made towards a hospital, which existed between 1601 and 1710, but there was no documentary evidence to identify Woodspring as the institution. He added that in the recent excavations they found burnt stone and wood, which gave rise to the suggestion that the choir had been destroyed by fire.

MR. BATTEN remarked that in parish books references to a hospital were often found; this would be for village or parish purposes, and must not be supposed to mean a general hospital, in our sense of the word. It should be remembered, too, that a hospice was not a hospital.

DR. HARDMAN read the following curious letter, showing the style in which favours were asked in the olden times:—

Letter asking for a grant of Woodspring Priory, addressed to Cromwell, the Royal Commissioner, by Humphrey Stafford.

“RIGHT Worshipful, yn my most humblyst wise I can, I commend me unto your good mastership, thankying your mastership ever for the great kyndenes and ffavour shewed unto me always, and when it may please your mastership to call to your good remembrances that ye promysed me to be good master unto me when the tyme came: Sir your mastership shall understand that whereas yet I am not able to doo suche acceptable service unto the kynges highnes my master, as my poore and true hert could, and if I hadd wherewith to mayntayn it, so it is, pleasith it your mastership to understand, that when I desyred Mr. Bryan to be so good



Woodspring Priory, Somerset - The "Hall" from N.W.

master unto me as to moshion unto your mastership to help me unto the gift of the priorie of Fynshed, a house of Chanons yn the countee of Northampton, of ye yearly value of lvj^{li} x^s xj^d ob. yn case it be subpressed, sir your mastership shall understond that sens [*since*] that tyme my naturall ffather willed me to write to your mastership, and to non others, for to be good master unto me for a house of Chanons, yn Somersett shiere called Worspryng, where my said ffather is ffounder therof and as I do suppose of like value or therabouts. And if it wold please your mastership to be so good master unto as to helpe me to Worspryng priorie, I were and wilbe wylst I leve your bedman [*i.e.*, offering prayers for you], and always redy to your mastership suche poore service and pleasure as shal become me to doo, whillest I do leve, God wylling, who ever have your mastership yn his tuysshon [*tuition*]. From Bletherwexe, thus present Palme Sunday, by your own assured to his litle power.

“HUMFFRUY STAFFORD,

“Esquyre.

“To the right honorable

“Sir Thomas Cromwell,

“Knyght, Secretorie.

“To the Kynges hyghnes d. d. thus.”

Mr. GREEN said the income of the Priory had been about £98 clear, equivalent to about £2,000 per annum of the present currency.

The interiors of the building, including the prior's hall, refectory, and tithe barn, were minutely inspected, nearly two hours being occupied.

The Hon. Secretary had prepared a short account of the Priory, but, as time did not permit a longer delay, the reading was omitted. This could the more easily be done, as a full history is intended from a local source. The following few notes only are added.

The original grant of William Courtenay is set out in a

patent of 1325 (18th Edward II, part 2, membrane 33), which, confirming all former gifts, states that the Priory was originally founded by Geoffrey Gilbelyn in Dodelyng. Besides the Courteney gifts, the Priory benefited largely from the Cantilupes. Gifts from several others are also found. Touching the principal ones, in 1226 (*Close Rolls*, 10th Henry III, m. 2), William de Cantilupe, jun., gave fifty shillings rent and lands, with belongings, in Wurle; and if the lands did not produce that amount, his father, William, sen., agreed to make it up—some principal, discreet men of the county to determine the value. In 1310, John de Cugayn allowed the prior a rent of twenty shillings. (*Pat. Rolls*, 4th Edward II, pt. 1, m. 26). In 1331, by patent (5th Edward III, pt. 2, m. 30), Henry Cary, vicar of Locking, gave some Montfort property, a messuage and 58 acres of land, seven pence rent, and a rent of twelve horse shoes (*clavorum equorum*) in Samford-juxta-Churchill. In 1410 (*Pat. Rolls*, 11th Henry IV, pt. 2, m. 21), there was another case, in which Robert Pobelowe, clerk, and John Venables, gave 174 acres of land in Worle, Wynscombe, Rolleston, and Pokerolleston, and seven acres in Worspring, the land of Robert More, the same passing after his death to said Robert and John: and also two acres in Worle, the land of Agnes Andrew—also destined to pass, after her death, to the same Robert and John, and so to the Priory. This looks like our “Charitable Trust,” by which so much has been gathered. In the Chapter documents at Wells is a covenant of the prior of Worspring, dated 1266, to pray for his benefactors. Besides such business events, there is but little to record of this or any similar place. Occasional legal squabbles alone vary the routine. In 1419, here, the prior was summoned, or complained against, for causing obstruction by placing bars on the wall called Wowall, the said wall being a common way (*Assize Rolls*, 7th Henry V).

One curious episode occurs, but relating more especially to the neighbourhood rather than to the Priory. In 1399, in an

inquisition on the goods of Richard, formerly King, and his adherents, forfeited in Somerset (1st and 2nd Henry IV, *Excheq. Q.R., Miscell.*), it was found that a ship belonging to the Duke of Surrey arrived at Rokysmille, full of goods, viz., vessels of silver, gold, and gilt, packed in salmon casks. There were also other jewels and cloths for the hall and the body, and utensils for the house. These the Abbot of Glastonbury seized, and with carts took them to Glastonbury, and from thence to Queen Camel, the whole being valued at £1000. It was also found that Purnella, daughter of Amicia Nelder, wife of John Nelder of Worle; Alice Yndener, wife of William Yndener of Worle; Alice, daughter of William Plymton of Banwell, and John Underwode of Worle, had "one little clothsak which they found south of the Elynes of Worspring, full of cloths and vestments, with a mitre and other goods and jewels, valued at £60."

The next notice foreshadows the end. A letter of early in 1534 (*S.P. Dom.*, Henry VIII, v. 6, 126), records that the writer was "enformyd by one of my lordes tenautes there that the Prior of Wulspring shalbe deposed shortly." Following this, on the 21st August, 1534, the prior and his house surrendered, and signed their acknowledgment that the Bishop of Rome was usurper, and that the King Henry was alone supreme head of the Church of England. The document is a neat and perfect one, the seal alone being somewhat broken. (*Augmentation Office*, No. 123). Mistakes have been made on this document: it is only an acknowledgment of supremacy, the Priory was not therefore dissolved, this came later. The date has not yet been stated.

The dissolution was under the Act of Parliament of 27th Henry VIII, cap. 28 (4th February, 1536), by which every religious house whose income was less than £200 per annum was given to the Crown. "Forasmoche as manifest synne, vicious, carnall and abomynable lyvyng, is dayly usyd and comytted amonges the lytell Abbeyes and Pryoryes, whereby

they spoyle, destroy, consume, and utterly waste all their goods, and albe it that many visytacons hath been had for two hundreth yeres and more, yet with lytell or none amendment: for the extirpyng and destruccoon of such vyce and synne"—be it enacted, etc. Accordingly, Worspring fell under this Act. With the smaller establishments there was not generally a formal document given at the time of their dissolution, and consequently the date when Worspring collapsed must be found by other means.

The King's ministers or agents who took possession necessarily had to send in their account of rentals received, the amounts being granted in augmentation of the Crown revenue. The first for Worspring (*Ministers' Accounts*, 27th Hen. VIII, No. 103), states that the property was in the hands of the Crown, annexed "in augmentation of revenue by Act of Parliament, 4th February, 27th Henry VIII, in earth, of the Church of England supreme head." It is for a half-year, six weeks and six days. From this document it is learned that although the estate was taken in hand in May, all matters went on as usual until 27th September, when the Priory was suppressed.

The property belonging is duly set out, but here epitomised: Worle produced £39 9s. 4d.; there being deducted as paid to Roger Normynton, formerly prior, expended by him £9 8s. 7½d.; and outgoings of his office, "before 27th Sept., when he was dissolved," £9 10s. 2½d. To Thos. Arundell, Knt., expenses of his office as collector for one year, £10 3s. 5d. Locking was put at £24 18s. 11d.; out of which £16 9s. 9d. were allowed to the prior, as already expended, and to Sir Thos. Arundell £6 9s. 5½d. Sanford Marsh produced £6 6s. 6d.; Butcombe, £2; Worspring Manor, and lands in Worle and Kewstoke, £12 19s. 6d.; the tithe of Worle, £8, and of Kewstoke, £4 13s. 4d.

A document undated, but of soon after the above date, is of interest, as showing the then rental value of the lands.

(Chapter House, County Bags, Miscell., No. 15.) It is headed —“The rent of the hole demaynes there, late beyng in the Pryor’s handes in parcels, and nowe letten and demysed for xxi yeres at the rent ensuing.

	£	s.	d.
“Firste, cxx acres pasture, at viii ^d the acre ...	4	0	0”
“Over cxxvij acres, arable, at iv ^d the acre ...	2	2	8”
“Over xxx acres of wode and waste, at j ^d the acre		2	6”
“Over xxx acres of mede, at xij ^d the acre ...	1	10	0”
“Over xiiij acres, mede, called Elman, lying within the parishe of Worle, at xvj ^d the acre		18	8”
“Over xiiij acres, mede, called Worle mede, lying in Worle aforesaid, at xij ^d the acre ...		13	0”
	<hr/>		
	£	12	16 10”
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A thoroughly enjoyable drive through Worle and Wolvershill brought the company to

Banwell,

where they at once alighted and partook of an excellent luncheon at the Ship Hotel. Mr. R. H. PAGET, M.P., presided.

At the conclusion of the repast the HON. SECRETARY announced that they would deviate somewhat from the original programme, and omit the bone cavern from their day’s exploration. This announcement at first caused some little disappointment, but subsequently, with the weather setting in very wet and boisterous, it was admitted that the omission had been well timed.

Banwell Church.

Mr. FERREY, standing outside the church, at the west end, commented on the leading features of the exterior. He said that the noble tower was of great size and height, but in other respects had no features distinct from other towers calling for

remark, except the planning and general treatment of the stair-turret was very artistically managed. He was also struck with the comparatively narrow width and shallow projections of the tower buttresses, as compared with other towers of the same period. In the second stage above the west doorway was a sculptured figure in a canopied niche on either side of the two-light window. The latter was panelled with stone about half-way up to the springing of the head, and contained representations of the conventional lily growing out of vases, of Renaissance character. One of these was the original; the other had been restored. He was in doubt as to the identity of the male figure on the north side of the window, holding a scroll, until Bishop Clifford suggested it to be the Archangel Gabriel, and that the whole design symbolised the Annunciation. The figure on the south side undoubtedly represented the Virgin. The idea was a well conceived and unusual one, of great interest. There was a fine south porch, with parvise over it. On each side of the east end of the nave were bold, octagonal turrets, carried up to some height—rather uncommon features. These contained the steps up to the rood-loft. It had been said that on great festivals in the church the procession of priests and acolytes went up by one stair-turret and descended by the other. The chancel had been partly rebuilt and much modernised. The east window had been shortened so as to give height for a reredos, but externally the original sill, at a lower level, remained.

The party then entered the church, and Mr. Ferrey drew attention to the excellent mouldings of the tower arch. The nave had a good clerestory. The nave arcade was light and elegant. It had been found necessary, for constructional reasons when the church was restored some years since, to insert tie-rods to the roof, which, of course, rather interfered with the original design. The manner in which the roof was, so to speak, wedded to the walls by means of ornamental wood panelling, stopping on the labels of the clerestory

windows was interesting. A similar treatment was to be found in two churches not far off, *viz.*, at Congresbury and Yatton. There were some corbel heads of curious character above the inner archways of the north and south doors, but he thought all of them were not original. There was a niche, containing a figure of the patron saint of the church, St. Andrew, on the east side of the tower, over the tower arch; also a buttress and string-course. Part of the latter followed a raking line. It seemed very probable, therefore, there had been an earlier nave, before the present one was built, when a cloister was added and the walls heightened. The front of the west gallery was embellished with some very good old Jacobean panelling. The circular font was of the 13th century, and on its bowl was an ornament, which he considered represented seaweeds—a not unlikely subject for sculpture, as the Bristol Channel was distant only some six miles. It was easy, moreover, to attach a suitable symbolic reference to these seaweeds. The minute band of sunk quatrefoils round the top of the bowl of the font seemed an addition made in the 15th century. The old oak benches, with shaped ends of poppy-heads, were to be remarked. The stone pulpit attached to one of the piers of the north nave arcade was mediæval, and of elegant Perpendicular design, but a modern stone staircase up to it had been added in late years. Last, not least, to be particularly observed was the magnificent oak rood-screen, designed in the best period of the Perpendicular style, differing from many other examples in being quite as well moulded and decorated on the east side as on the west, and with a loft coved out on both sides.

Mr. Ferrey's views as regarded the ornaments on the font were combated, it being suggested that lilies were intended; but Mr. Ferrey maintained that the sculptures were far more like sea-weeds, as he had considered them to be.

Various objects of interest, in the shape of parochial records, were kindly shown by Mr. THOMAS CASTLE, Churchwarden.

At the invitation of Miss FAZAKERLEY, the party then adjourned to her residence at

The Abbey.

After inspecting the "chapel," on returning to the entrance hall, a vote of thanks was accorded to Miss Fazakerly for her kind reception, to which she duly responded.

The whole house being quite modern, there remains nothing historic but the site, save that perhaps some of the old stones may have been worked in during reconstruction.

A brief visit was then paid to the Vicarage, where the Rev. W. H. TURNER received the party on the lawn. From thence, by invitation, they proceeded to

The Castle.

Rain was now descending, making the walk so very disagreeable that only a portion of the company ventured to the

Roman Landmark.

This, known as the lesser Camp, consists of a square embankment, containing a cruciform earthwork.

Dr. EMERTON having kindly cut the cross and otherwise aided examination by clearing the surface, explained the result of his labours. In accordance with his supposition that something substantial may be found beneath he discovered every indication of solid stone work, besides remains of pottery and bones; but he was not specially rewarded.

The Rev. Prebendary SCARTH said if the exploration were continued the explorers must not be disappointed if they found but little to reward them for their pains. In various parts similar tumuli had been found, and they were believed to be boundary marks, containing, as they did, pieces of pottery, pieces of wood, and even oyster shells; all of which had a significant meaning, as indicating certain limits to the land surveyors of those early days.

Mr. Scarth's remarks are more fully embodied in a paper printed in Part II.

Proceeding next to the Castle, the party rejoined in the park fronting the lawn, where tea was comfortably served in a marquee.

After the tea Dr. EMERTON showed and commented on his various finds in the camps near, and a general conversation ensued.

This concluded the day's explorations.

Mr. PAGET moved a hearty vote of thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Emerton for their great kindness in entertaining the Society.

Dr. EMERTON responded.

Prebendary SCARTH proposed thanks to Mr. Smyth-Pigott for opening the Roman villa at Yatton, and also for excavating at Woodspring, thus materially enhancing the interest of the Society's meeting.

A vote of thanks accorded the Local Hon. Secretaries and Committee, acknowledged by Mr. WOOLER, brought the proceedings to a close. The party then repaired to "Trafalgar-square," where conveyances were in waiting, and returned to Weston-super-Mare in good time, the pleasure of the journey being materially marred by a drenching downpour.
