

The Excursion.

The first point was the parish church of

St. Guthbert,

whose history was explained on the spot by Mr. Freeman. He said that he should have but little to say on some of the points for which the church was most famous, such as the images belonging to the transept-altars. These he would leave to those antiquaries within whose departments those objects came; they concerned himself only so far as they might sometimes help him to the date of some part of the building. That there had been a Norman church on the site was proved by the discovery of a Norman pillar-piscina (which was shown), which had been built up as old materials in one of the transept walls. This of course proved that there had been a Norman church, but it proved nothing as to its size and shape. The present church dated from the thirteenth century, and might be described as a church of that age thoroughly recast by gradual changes ranging from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Externally the building was almost wholly perpendicular, and, on first entering, the proportion and general effect were completely those of one of the great perpendicular churches of the county. But a second glance would shew that a large portion of an earlier fabric still remained, and that a large part of the recasting had been done in a very unusual way. The Early English church was probably built about the time of its confirmation to the dean and chapter by Bishop Joceline in 1240. It was originally one of those large cross churches with central towers, which were known in Somersetshire by the strange and unaccountable name

of "quarter-cathedrals." The central tower had however been removed at a very late date, a change of which he would say more presently. The nave was of the same length as at present, six bays ; the pillars still remained throughout ; the perpendicular builders, instead of rebuilding the nave from the ground, as they commonly did, had raised the pillars, preserving their old section in the part added, and had used the old capitals up again. The general effect of a perpendicular nave was thus produced. It was easy to see where the pillars had been patched, the new part being of a different stone and of longer pieces of stone. This sort of adaptation of old work, though by no means unique, was still far from common, and it should be carefully noted wherever it was found. The original height of the nave was marked by the gable-line still to be seen against the west wall. The original transepts also were lower than at present ; in the south transept the original plain buttresses could be seen, which had been ingeniously enriched and carried up in perpendicular times. Two windows of this date still remain, one in the east wall of the south transept, and one in the room attached to the church on the north side. Both are of incipient geometrical character. A general idea of the original building, a large Early English cross church, could easily be obtained. The process by which it had been changed into its present shape was a very gradual one. In elucidating it Mr. Freeman said that he had been greatly aided by the extracts from the parish records which had been kindly lent him by Mr. Serel, whose knowledge of the local antiquities of Wells they all knew and appreciated. Some of course among Mr. Serel's papers related to matters which did not come within his province, but from others he had obtained some most valuable dates, fixing in fact the most important points in the

history of the building. In other points he had to trust to the evidence of the building itself. The changes had been made at various times, and in some parts additions were built up against earlier work of exactly the same character. This was often the case; one addition in fact suggested another, and the second was often made very soon after the first, while the style in use was still exactly the same. Thus, in St. Cuthbert's, no difference in style could be seen between the south porch and the adjoining chapel, but the masonry clearly showed that the porch was completed before the chapel was thought of. Of course in an addition of this sort the evidence of the masonry was exactly the same, whether the two erections were separated by a year or by a century. The perpendicular reconstruction of St. Cuthbert's began very early in the style, and began in a part of the church which the perpendicular builders of Somersetshire often rather neglected. They had seen a great many churches throughout the county which retained earlier chancels, quite unworthy, both in size and character, of the splendid naves and towers with which they were brought into contact. But here a large and stately choir with aisles had been built in the very first days of the perpendicular period. The style of the choir, in fact, can hardly be called fully developed perpendicular; like so much Somersetshire work, the general effect is perpendicular, while much of the detail is still rather to be called decorated. It was doubtless a work of the latter part of the fourteenth century. It had, in fact, itself undergone changes at a later period of the perpendicular style, when the gable and parapet received their present form. The transepts must have been raised at the same time, a change rendered necessary by the height given to the choir-aisles. The arch between the

south transept and the south choir-aisle was clearly of this date, and must have existed before the Jesse altar. This transept, known as Tanner's or Coward's chapel, contained the altar of St. Mary, in honour of whom Tanner's chantry was founded in 1402, doubtless not long after the completion of this first instalment of the general reconstruction of the church. But the famous Jesse altar itself, with the splendid sculptures now defaced, was not erected till 1470. In the course of the later perpendicular changes a chapel had been thrown out on each side beyond the aisles. In the north chapel, the original Early English window in the east wall of the attached room on that side, and also the original perpendicular west window of the recast north transept, had thus become internal. It followed that no such addition had been thought of when the transepts were recast. But, leaving these minor matters of later date, he would return to the general course of the reconstruction. Next after the rebuilding of the choir followed the addition of the western tower. As usual in Somersetshire, the tower was built up against the original nave, and the recasting of the nave followed the addition of the tower. That this was the order was shewn by the roof-line already spoken of, and by other evidence in the masonry. No doubt, both here and elsewhere, the idea of the reconstruction of the nave was mainly suggested by a wish to bring it into harmony with the new tower. In some churches, as at Wrington, the nave was thus unduly cramped between the old chancel and the new tower, but no such result took place at St. Cuthbert's, where the nave was of ample size from the beginning. Of the tower, as a work of art, he would speak when he came to the exterior; he now mentioned it only as a stage in the history of the church. It opened, or should open to the nave, by a lofty panelled

arch, now cruelly blocked by an organ and other obstructions. Going out under this arch, they would see an Elizabethan man, removed, for he knew not what crime, from his tomb in the choir, and now left to lie about among the rubbish under the tower. Higher up, but now blocked off by a floor, was the fine vaulting of the tower. When the western tower was thus added, it should be remembered that the central tower still existed, and there seems to have been no intention of destroying it. The recasting of the nave then followed, effected, as had been already said, not, as usual, by complete rebuilding, but by lengthening the original Early English pillars, and adding the very fine clerestory and roof. The windows of the clerestory were four-centred, and were thus able to be made, as at Martock and Bruton, wider than in many of the other Somersetshire clerestories where the simple-pointed arch was employed. Both the clerestory and the aisle windows formed a noble range. The roof was not one of the local coved roofs, but a singularly fine low-pitched roof with tie-beams, a form not uncommon in the county where a clerestory is found. The last stage in the history of the building was that which obliterated all trace of its original outline. This, Mr. Freeman said, he would introduce in the words of a most important document for which he had to thank Mr. Serel. In the corporation records for the year 1561, occurred this entry :—

“That this tyme ther is appoynted a Colleccon by the M^r of the Towne for the Newe Makyng and Settyngge uppe the Church wher the Styple did stand.”

This entry in short was the key to the history of the building. No one could think that the “styple” in question, which had ceased to stand in 1561, had anything to do with the western tower, which was still standing in

1863. This entry proved, what might have been guessed without it, the former existence of a central tower and its co-existence with the present western tower. It thereby explained much that was puzzling in the appearance of the central part of the church. As it now stood the nave of St. Cuthbert's was a nave of seven bays, the seventh bay being separated from the sixth by a large piece of blank wall, interrupting the design both of the pier-arches and of the clerestory. Through this piece of blank wall, it might be observed, ingenious churchwardens had bored holes for the purpose of sight and hearing during the various wanderings of the pulpit, which holes might easily puzzle some future antiquary. These holes, he might say, produced a most unpleasant look of insecurity; whether there really was any danger was a point which he must leave to architects. Now these pieces of blank wall, much wider as they were than was needed merely for the arches between the aisles and the transepts, were in fact the supports of the central tower. Again the chancel-arch and the arches into the transepts, though presenting a superficial appearance of Early English work, had a most queer and ungenue look, and the masonry shewed that the chancel-arch was plainly later than the fourteenth century work in the choir. There could be no doubt that these arches were really the result of the order of 1561 "for the Newe Makyng and Settyng uppe the Church where the Style did stand." "Making and setting up the church" are words which implied something much more than mere everyday repair, and clearly pointed to some such large reconstruction as he was now speaking of. No doubt the tower fell, like so many other central towers, and, when it had fallen, it was determined not to rebuild it. The western arch of the lantern was therefore wholly

removed, and the old area of the tower thrown into the nave ; hence the pieces of blank wall on both sides. The other three arches were rebuilt, using up the Early English materials, so as to produce the appearance already spoken of. It followed from this that the eastern pair of clerestory windows and the part of the roof over them were of the date of 1561. This might seem startling at first sight, but good Gothic work, even in original designs, was occasionally found as late as that date and much later, and it would doubtless be still easier to find workmen capable of producing work of this kind in close imitation of the old work hard by. It might be perhaps thought, as there was no perceptible break inside, that the whole clerestory and roof ought to be assigned to the year 1561. Mr. Freeman, however, said that there was a palpable break outside. It was not very clear from below, at least not on the south side;* but he had gone up on the aisle roof that morning in company with Mr. Stubbs and Mr. Green, and they had then found a distinct break in the wall on each side of the clerestory, accompanied by a change in the details of the parapet, slight indeed, but enough to shew that there is work of two dates. The breaks are not opposite to each other on the two sides, doubtless because the tower, in its fall, did more damage on one side than on the other. There could then be no doubt that the eastern portions, but only the eastern portions, of the clerestory and roof, were really of the latter half of the sixteenth century, and very creditable they were to workmen of that date.

Mr. FREEMAN, having thus finished the history of the building, took the company outside, to a point lying north-

* Mr. Parker afterwards pointed out that on the north side there is a marked difference in the colour of the stone. In fact this difference may be seen a long way off.—E. A. F.

west of the church, for the purpose of discoursing on the surviving western tower as one of the grand series of Somersetshire towers. Its exact date he would not attempt to fix. He had found that the perpendicular style, especially in Somersetshire, was spread over so long a time with so little change in detail, that he had long left off guessing at the dates of these buildings. When he could find a documentary date, he was thankful for it ; when he could not, he was satisfied with saying, on the evidence of the masonry, that one part of a building was older than another part, without venturing guesses, which might turn out to be wrong, as to the exact date of either. Of this tower he would only say that it was later than the choir, which is very early in the style, and earlier than the reconstruction of the nave, which is clearly late in the style. He would however correct a mistaken notion which had led some people to attribute the tower to the reign of Edward III., as it was clearly later than that. This idea had taken its rise from some coats of arms in the west wall ; but these, as a very slight examination would show, had been built up again in their present place. They were fixed in distinctly decorated panels, and they had probably formed part of an earlier west front before the addition of the tower. Mr. Freeman then called the attention of his hearers to the grand outline which the church must have presented when both towers were standing. An approach to a grouping of two towers might be seen in some other churches in the county, as at Bruton and Wedmore, but here must have been the complete arrangement of a western and central tower, like Purton and Wimborne Minster. He then went on to speak of the design of the tower itself, and its rank among the other great towers of the county. He had long ago given it the second place among them,

and he saw no reason to depart from that judgment. The first place, he need hardly say, he gave to Wrington; the design of Evercreech was so nearly the same as that of Wrington that the two could not be separated in an estimate of this kind. He placed St. Cuthbert's in the first rank of towers, because it exhibited that arrangement which struck him as the grandest, that in which the whole upper part of the tower was thrown into one vast panelled stage. By this arrangement an unity was given to the whole design, which was not to be found in many of the towers of the Taunton type, where a stage could be added or taken away without greatly interfering with the general design. But, though he placed St. Cuthbert's in the first rank, he could give it only a secondary place in that rank, because, though the general design was the same as that of Wrington, it was by no means carried out with the same perfect elegance of detail. The large corner pinnacles might perhaps be thought too heavy, and there could be no doubt much was lost by the omission of the small central pinnacles, and by the substitution of a mere battlement for the beautiful open parapet of Wrington. There was a coarseness too about the details of the windows; they greatly wanted labels, and the division into stages was not well managed. At Wrington the height of the long mullions was broken by two transoms, mere transoms with parallel heads below them, thus making a good division, and breaking the height without making the horizontal line too prominent. At St. Cuthbert's there was only one transom, which made the two stages much too long, and the horizontal line was made needlessly prominent by the addition of a broad band of panelling. There were other minor points in which it would be easily seen that this tower fell short of the perfect elegance of

Wrighton. Still there could be no doubt that it was, in its general effect, one of the noblest towers in Somersetshire, and therefore one of the noblest parochial towers in England. As a parishioner of St. Cuthbert's, he felt proud of it, for he must explain to his hearers that he was a parishioner of St. Cuthbert's, though, when they reached his house, they would very likely think it a geographical paradox that he should be so. He had now done his part, and would hand over the next object, the neighbouring hospital, to Mr. Parker. "I will only," he added, "say thus much, that from where I stand I can just see certain stone seats in the hospital which, I suppose, gave some ingenious person the first idea of these stone stalls under which we now suffer in the choir of the cathedral."

Accompanied by Mr. Parker, the visitors proceeded to the hospital founded by Bishop Bubwith for poor and deserving inhabitants of Wells, adjoining St. Cuthbert's churchyard. Mr. Parker condemned the alteration which had been made, and which divided the beautiful open roof of the chapel by a screen wall, separating the chapel from the remainder of the edifice. The open roof ran all along the structure, and its fine appearance had been totally destroyed in this manner, and by the erection of cells above the original cells. These additions should have been made elsewhere. The old town-hall stood at the west end of the hospital. The visitors were shewn a rare and fine old painted chest, said to be the founder's chest.

Favoured by splendid weather, the company, to the number of sixty or seventy, next started on the only excursion of the meeting. The first halting-place was at

Wookey Hole,

and here Mr. DAWKINS acted as guide and lecturer. He

pointed out the caverns round the ravine in which the party were collected; informed them that these caves had been hollowed out by the action of water; and explained how it had been ascertained that the water, which ran into the Axe from the mouth of the cavern in the rear of Mr. Hodgkinson's paper-mill, flowed at least two miles, from north to south, through various other caverns. In his description of the cave known at the Hyæna Den, he stated that it was first cut into a few years back by workmen engaged in making a canal for the conveyance of water to the paper-mills. The workmen found it filled it with earth, and large bones and teeth. One workman sold 2 cwt. of rhinoceros' teeth to a bone-dealer in Wells as old bones: a greater piece of barbarism he had never heard of. He heard of the cave soon afterwards, and had been digging at it from time to time during the last five years. He gradually dug his way in, and in the course of his explorations he had found a most remarkable assemblage of animal remains. He found an enormous quantity of hyæna bones, three species of bear, two species of lion, one of wolf: and among other creatures upon which these fierce animals fed, he found the bones of three species of deer and two species of oxen. He also found certain traces of human occupation—flint implements, splinters of flint, a bone arrow-head, and bone ashes. The flint implements were like those found at Abbeville in 1847. These traces of man were discovered underneath the layers of bones, and afforded good evidence of the contemporaneity of man with the extinct *fauna*. The cave was now thirty-six feet above the level of the Axe, so that great changes had taken place since floods flowed into this cavern. Most of the remains seemed to him to have been borne into the cave by hyænas, because on nearly all the bones were

marks of their teeth. The sound bones found were invariably those which contained no marrow, and which the instinct of the hyæna would prevent him from cracking. Coins of Commodus and other Roman emperors had been found near the cave in digging for the canal. Six months back, while a gasometer was being laid, a human skeleton was found beneath a ledge of rock; the greater part of the skull was lost, and nearly all the bones, but from what remained he observed a depression inside the brow, closely allied to the Australian type of the present day; and it was singular, if nothing else, that the implements used by the Australian aborigines were more like those found at Wookey than the implements of any other race.

Mr. Freeman said that he would say here what ought to be said at some stage of the excursion, that during a great part of the day they were travelling along the line of Ceawlin's frontier, the frontier of England and Wales in 577. The Axe was the boundary from its source, and for a considerable distance from its source it was still the boundary of the parishes of Wells and Wookey. He was himself personally interested in the matter, as, at one point, this ancient frontier formed, for some way, the boundary of his own property. Where they stood now, in Wells parish, would in 577 have still been Wales; the other side of the stream, in the parish of Wookey, already in 577 was England. Along the border district several Celtic names were still preserved. The word Wookey, locally "Ooky," was, according to the Rev. W. A. Jones, the Welsh *ogo*, meaning 'cavern;' so that when they said Wookey Hole, they in fact said the same thing twice over, as was often the case. Ben Knoll, which they were about to visit, was a similar instance, *pen* being Welsh, and *knoll* English, for 'hill.'

The Rev. F. WARRE spoke of the discovery of skeletons at Worle Hill, which he believed to be the skeletons of a forlorn hope led by Ceawlin, the West Saxon conqueror, who made the Axe his boundary; and he said the skulls of those skeletons presented the very peculiarity Mr. Dawkins had mentioned.

Wookey Church

was the next place visited. It is a plain perpendicular edifice, with a good oak roof, a curious squint, and a fine monument to one of the Clarkes of Chipley.

Wookey Rectory, formerly the residence of the Subdean of Wells, and now ludicrously known as "Mellifont Abbey," is remarkable for the curious manner in which stone fragments of an older house have been used in the re-erection of the building. An oriel window has been built in over the porch, and the old corbels have been stuck into the walls. The house was thus rebuilt in 1730. The neighbouring Court, formerly a manorial dwelling of the bishops, and from which many of Beckington's letters are dated, was then visited. There remains an Early English doorway, exactly agreeing with the Palace and the west front of the Cathedral, and there are mullions of late Perpendicular date.

TO CASTLE HILL the company were guided by the Rev. F. WARRE, who pointed out that the original plan was threefold, the outer enclosure having been bounded by the river, the course of which is now changed, and analogous to that of Worle Castle, Neroche, and Windsor.

The party then journeyed to

Ben Inoll,

and here Mr. Warre maintained there had been a small fortified settlement in primitive days, of the type probably used before the Belgic invasion. The circular spots on the hill

had been covered with huts, and he had dug up from under one charcoal remains, which proved human habitation. The view from the summit of the Knoll is magnificent. Looking towards the Bristol Channel, it is skirted on the right hand by the noble Mendips, in the middle distance Brent Knoll, probably the head-quarters of the herdsmen, stands boldly up, to the left appears Glastonbury Tor, and at the back the architectural grandeur of Wells presents a striking feature in the landscape. The intermediate plain smiles with fertility, and was appropriately styled by the ancient Britons, according to Mr. Warre, "the laughing summer field." Mr. Warre is of opinion that the wide expanse visible from this Knoll formed an important settlement of the Cangi. Every knoll visible he believes was occupied by the herdmen of the day, who tended their flocks in the splendid grazing district surrounding them. Castle Hill he believes to have been the most strongly fortified place of the group, and a field below Ben Knoll, where skeletons have been found, he considers to have been the burying-place of the tribe.

After listening to an animated discussion between Mr. Warre and Mr. Dawkins as to the probability and improbability of Ben Knoll having been a dwelling-place of the primitive races, the excursionists proceeded to Summerleaze, the residence of Mr. E. A. Freeman, and were there most hospitably entertained. Before the members separated, the Rev. J. F. Dimock, the Rev. G. Williams, the Rev. W. Stubbs, the Rev. J. R. Green, and Mr. W. Boyd Dawkins were elected honorary members of the Society, and a vote of thanks was cordially passed to the Mayor and Corporation of Wells, and to the officers of the Association.