

## A few Notes on Yatton Church.

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BY REV. J. W. HARDMAN, LL.D.

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THE prebendal church of St. Mary the Virgin, Yatton, was (and still I believe is) a "peculiar" in the Diocese of Wells.

It is a large cruciform structure, with central tower and unfinished spire. There was existing here some years ago a portion of a Norman font, now buried underground; but there are no other traces left of any early ecclesiastical structure, though the existence of two springs, called respectively "Bishop's Well" and "Holy Well," point to the primitive evangelization of the locality.

Of the present building, four different periods may be distinguished: the earliest, the arch between north aisle of nave and north transept, Early English; the tower arches and south transept window of Decorated period; the chancel, early Perpendicular; and the nave and porch, which are very fine specimens of late Perpendicular of the Somerset type.

The south transept contains a window of flowing or curvilinear tracery, of a type which, curious to say, is very common in the south and west of Ireland. The two transepts, and the chapel at north side of the chancel, were respectively dedicated to St. Katharine, St. John the Evangelist, and St. James. The two latter chapels were built by the Newton family, who held the manor of Court de Wyck.

There are in the church five stone staircases. The hagioscopes should be observed; but one is closed. There was once a rood-screen, which stretched across the east end of the nave, and certainly across one of the aisles. The stairs to the rood-loft still remain, also some of the supports, one being curiously carved with the bent figure of a monk. The rood-screen, of

which one small fragment of the foliage was recently found, was adorned with 70 carved figures, which were erected in the year A.D. 1455, and cost £3 10s. 4d. In 1448 the rood-cross was set up with a canopy.

In the Court de Wyck chapel, or north transept, are two recessed tombs, one containing an effigy of a female, the other of a civilian; but in the centre is a far more interesting tomb, as it can be identified as that of Sir Richard Newton, chief-justice of the common pleas, who died about 1448. He is in full legal costume, with coif, and purse to contain the seal, and wears the collar of SS. His wife's figure, Ennota de Sherborne, is well worthy of attention for her elegant costume and the beauty of her jewellery. This monument is recorded in the Parliamentary Blue Book on "Ancient Sepulchral Monuments." The original name of the Newton family was "Cradoc," but Sir Richard assumed the name of Newton. He took the position of Serjeant-at-law in 1424, 3rd year of King Henry VI; in 1426 he acted as judge on circuit in Pembrokeshire; in 1430 he was chosen Recorder of Bristol; on Nov. 8th, 1438, he was appointed Judge of Common Pleas, and presided there for nearly nine years. The effigies are carved in alabaster, and were painted and gilded.

In the angle between the north transept and the chancel is a beautiful chapel, erected by the Newton family, and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. Here is an interesting piscina, marking it as a chantry chapel, with a beautiful and highly enriched tomb; it has on it the effigies of Sir John Newton (the son of the Justice, Sir Richard) and his wife, Isabel de Cheddre. He wears the collar of SS., is in plate armour, and has not only a sword but also a dagger or knife arranged in the same sheath. Behind the figures is a curious bas-relief of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary—the lily in the vase is the Virgin's emblem; whilst near the angel is the scroll containing the angelic salutation. The Holy Ghost descends as a dove. Beside the kneeling figure of the Virgin is a

remarkable desk, formed cleverly to revolve, and yet to be well balanced by the weight of the book. .

The will of Sir John Newton was proved April 20, 1487. For his burial in the church of Yatton he bequeathed £6 8s. 8d. This good man also directed 20s. to be paid to his tailor in Bristol! The document ends thus:—"In witness that this is my effectual and last will, I have put hereto my seale in this Church of our Lady of Yatton."

His widow, Isabel, died in 1498 (Henry VII). She made her will on March 14, 1498, and ordered her executors "to find a well disposed Priest to sing for my soul within the Church of Yatton and the new Chapel of St. John during the space of 5 years." She also bequeathed money (6s. 8d.) for "the prisoners of Newgate in the town of Bristowe."

At the west end of the north aisle may be seen a series of carved corbels, representing a King (said to be Henry IV) and Queen, a Bishop and a Pope. The triple tiara can be remarked.

The Church expense books begin about 1448, and are very interesting. In 1534 the parish authorities paid 30s. for a "hole sewte of vestments with a cope;" in 1539 they laid out 8d. for making a chain for their "Bybull." There are also some particulars of the erection of a churchyard cross, of which the base only is left.

The sculpture under the gable probably represents the Holy Trinity. The weathering of the original gable of the nave was visible on the west face of the tower inside the church till the recent restoration.

The tower contains eight bells; the tenor has the inscription, "Miserecordias Domini in Eternum Cantabo." At his especial request, a poor man was buried under the tower, on account of his love for the sound of the bells.

The churchyard was consecrated in the year 1486, by Bishop Robert Stillington, at a cost of £4 6s. 8d.