

Second Day: Excursion.

The arrangements for the Excursion, which gave universal satisfaction, were made by the Local Secretaries Rev. J. Gowing, and Mr. J. Baker. About mid-day by the kind courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Evans, a very large party assembled at

Ford Abbey.

MR. CHARLES E. DAVIS who conducted the party explained its Architectural peculiarities, general arrangement, and gave a resumè of its history. He considered that

Ford Abbey was probably one of the earliest Cistercian foundations in England. It was first founded at Brightley, Oxfordshire, by Baldwin de Brion, Sheriff of Devon, in 1133, and, from various causes, was afterwards removed to its present site in 1141. The earliest remaining portion he considered must have been erected from thirty to forty years subsequent to this date. Sufficient however, of the original buildings remains following conformably with the usual Cistercian arrangement to enable a tolerably accurate plan to be made. Standing on the south side of the Abbey and facing the Perpendicular Cloister, with the door into the present Chapel immediately on the right, we may believe we are in the centre of the original cloister, which, in all probability was equilateral, the surviving Cloister in front being one of the sides. The Chapter House (the present Chapel) occupies the centre eastward, and faced the entrance to the Cloister and Monastery. The Church extended the whole length of the south side of the Cloister and Gate House giving the length of the nave, while the transept, north and south, were in continuation with the Chapter House, the Chancel still further east. No portion of the original Church remains. The building still existing on the east northward continues the plan, and is so far complete, as it gives a groined basement floor, in which were the workshops and store-houses of the Monks, with a very perfect dormitory above, now divided into several chambers. Approached by a central door from the north side of the Cloister were the refectory and kitchen, these still remain.

The Gate House on the west side has been removed as well as the Abbot's lodgings, which must have extended further north, to make way for a porch and entrance, with drawing room and staircase, erected by Inigo Jones in

his best style. Still further westward is a very fine pile of buildings, evidently erected by Abbot Chard, who surrendered the Monastery in 1539. It appeared to Mr. Davis to have been intended for new Abbot's lodgings the hall of which still remaining, measures fifty-five feet by twenty-eight, with a dais, solar, &c., at the western end. This building is most elaborate,—a tower on the exterior forms the entrance porch, with a beautiful oriel window above, of two storeys. The windows that light the hall are of very good character, and the whole is elaborately enriched with armorial bearings of the patrons and abbots of the Monastery.

At the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Evans the company partook of the sumptuous provision hospitably laid out for them, which was suitably acknowledged by the President on behalf of the Society.

The Members then proceeded to

Leigh House,

the seat of Mrs. Henley. The mansion was kindly thrown open to the visitors, who afterwards assembled upon the lawn, where they were addressed by

MR. PARKER, who said that he asked them to assemble there, as it was the best point from which they could obtain a view of that very pretty and handsomely built Elizabethan House. It was called the Grange, and was said to be one of the Granges of the Abbey. It was now distinctly one of those nice gentlemen's houses which were built very frequently on the sites of the houses or granges when they were granted to wealthy families in the time of James I. It was a remarkably complete and good example of that style. Some few alterations were made in the time of Charles I. and Charles II. but the greater

portion of the original house remained, and it was a perfect example of the period. The two bay mediæval-looking windows, one above the other, did not denote that the house was erected earlier than in Elizabeth's time. It not unfrequently happened that such windows were inserted in Elizabethan houses, which showed that the mediæval arrangement continued during that Queen's reign. The house took from fifteen to seventeen years in building. They did things in those days steadily. They did not hurry them over as at present. He had no doubt that the date of the erection was from 1593 to 1610. There were, as usual, two court yards, one connected with the kitchen, and offices, following the mediæval arrangement. The whole of the centre of the house was occupied by the hall which divided it into two parts, according to the custom of the period, to keep the servants away from the other part of the house. He would now speak upon a matter to which he intended referring the previous evening. Some three or four years ago he was requested by the Members of that Society to publish his papers on Wells Cathedral, the Palace, Deanery, and other Ecclesiastical places. Generally, with archæological works, the author had to bear the whole of the expense. The leading Members, however, came forward very handsomely and said that they would provide the woodcuts, if he (Mr. Parker) would publish the papers. He had thus made a little book which would only cost five shillings. Wells was the most remarkable city in England, and there was not such a series of Ecclesiastical buildings in the world. They had all the buildings appertaining to the Cathedral to make a Cathedral establishment complete. It was indeed the only Cathedral Church in England complete in all its parts. Besides the Church there were also the

Palace, the Deanery, the Archdeaconry, houses for the Canons, the Vicars Choral, the Choristers, the Master of the Fabric, the Precentor, the Organist, in fact, everything that was required. The infamous manner in which it was robbed in the time of Cromwell was the means of its being preserved. Poverty was the great preserver of ancient relics. He was acquainted with most of the antiquities of Europe, and there was no city which would equal Wells in the completeness of the series of Ecclesiastical buildings. He had a number of photographs of the principal objects which the Members of the Society might procure from the museum at Taunton if they wished for them, at the cost price.

The Members then proceeded to

Cudworth Church,

which MR. FREEMAN stated contained a most remarkable mixture of styles, and that proved to him that the Church had gone through all kinds of changes. The exact order and extent of those changes he could not make out. There was a Norman tower—a very rich design. There was the tympanum, with the small arch above. Then they had lancet windows, in several places mixed with early Decorated windows. The window on the east side of the south porch was a very curious one, and a little restoration would do good without doing any harm. That window was worth studying. One of the trefoils was characteristic of the fourteenth century. At Ditcheat there was a similar example. The east window might be of any date—probably of the fourteenth century. On the south side there was one Perpendicular window—indeed they had all the different forms of windows. There was also a beautiful Norman font. Of the arches inside he

could not say much about. It was very bad and poor work, and might have been constructed in the fourteenth century. The piscina was good, and he had no doubt that the Church had a coved roof.

MR. PARKER said that he would endeavour to give some idea of the date. The Church appeared to have been commenced in the reign of Henry II., was carried on in the time of John, and then, after an interval, the Chapel was built in the reign of Edward I. The chancel window appeared to be of the time of Edward II., and the other windows were inserted at later periods. There was a Norman tower and font. There was formerly a door in the porch on the north side, but that had been blocked up.

The interior was then examined, and Mr. Parker said that anything more absurd than the partition in the south aisle he could not conceive. If they wanted to put up a partition why could they not have fixed it at the pillar, and not immediately in the middle of the arch? It seemed as if the Churchwardens endeavoured to make the thing look as ugly as possible. The cradle roof was of very early date—probably the time of Edward III. Professor Willis had found one in Gloucestershire which was constructed at the beginning of the fourteenth century. There was something similar at Windsor. He (Mr. Parker) was of opinion that the date of the roof was 1353-4. Antiquarians had a habit of dating the Perpendicular style not sufficiently early. It was true that the style prevailed principally in the fifteenth century, but he had found examples of that style which could not be dated after the middle of the fourteenth century. There were numerous specimens in the reign of Edward III. The Norman font was remarkably good. It was decorated

with the star ornament, which was not very common in this country. It was therefore of considerable interest, and was erected in the reign of Henry II. There was a western doorway which he did not think was an original arrangement, but introduced afterwards.

Having again taken their seats in the carriages the company visited

Dowlish Wake Church,

where there is a monument erected to the memory of the lamented Captain Speke. It is a sarcophagus of serpentine marble, and upon the top is an inlaid brass cross. Around it, also inlaid in brass, is the following :—
 “Sacred to the memory of John Hanning Speke, second son of William and Georgina Speke, who died September 15, 1864, aged 37 years.” Above is a circular arch, upon which are carved the emblems of the Nile—an alligator and hippopotamus. Above is the bust of the deceased, encircled by a lotus wreath. In the recesses are military badges, and a quadrant encircled by a belt upon which “A Nilo Præclarus” is engraved. A two-light memorial window has also been erected in the north chapel by J. Lee Lee, Esq., of Dillington.

With regard to the interior of the Church, MR. PARKER said that these appeared to be a fifteenth century tower built inside the walls of a thirteenth century Church, similar to the Friary Churches in Ireland. It was, however, quite uncommon in England. The walls appeared to be much older than the tower, and the only explanation he could give was that a more modern tower had been built into an earlier Church. The Church had been recently restored, by no means badly. It was, indeed, made into a handsome modern Church, but possessed no

great interest to the archæologist. The aisle appeared to have been added in the reign of Henry V.

Having repaired to the outside, MR. FREEMAN said that he asked Mr. Parker to take his place inside the Church because that gentleman had a very ingenious theory about the tower. He (Mr. Freeman) was not prepared to say either yes or no at the moment, and, therefore, he thought that Mr. Parker should explain it himself. The tower was almost as strange outside as inside and he could not conceive how it got there. At Butleigh there was one of a similar class. They did not worship *all* old churches, for there were good and bad architects as there are now. They had now certainly fallen in with the work of one of the bad architects. Putting aside the mere dignity of outline nothing could be possibly worse than the tower. It was not quite clear whether the architect intended making it less square than it was. The west walls were carried out as buttresses. On the west side was a little window as poor as anything could be. The embattlements were poor, and to relieve the summit of the tower were two gurgoyles placed on the south side. The other windows in the Church were new or copied from the old ones.

The company then visited

Wake Hill House,

where W. Speke, Esq., of Jordans, entertained them. The greatest hospitality was shown by the Rev. H. Speke, in the absence of his father.

The company having assembled upon the lawn, the President thanked Mr. and Mrs. Speke for their hearty reception, and great hospitality. He proposed their health with cheers.

The REV. H. SPEKE said that on behalf of his father and mother he returned them his sincere thanks. His father was anxious to have entertained them at Jordans, but as the Society could not go there until the following morning Wake Hill House had been substituted as the place of entertainment. He thanked them for the honour conferred upon his father and mother by their attendance that day.

Kingstone Church

concluded the excursion of the second day.

MR. FREEMAN said there was a great deal more to see outside than inside. First of all he wanted to say something as to his observations upon Dowlish Wake Church. What he said from the point where he was stationed was substantially correct, but on the north side the belfry turret relieved the tower from the absurd appearance to which he alluded on the south side. Kingstone Church he remembered to have seen some thirteen or fourteen years ago. It pretty well escaped all those faults which the other Church, built on the same plan, had fallen into. He quite forgot when at Dowlish Wake that there was a Church similar to it so near at hand from which he could draw an illustration. Here they had a simple example of the plan of the Church spoken of. It had a tower between the nave and chancel, and nothing else—no aisles or anything of the kind. The tower was much more finished and of much better design in the upper storey, and the window was far superior to the window at Dowlish Wake. The gargoyles were placed in a better position and were of much better design. The pinnacles were broken off. The nave was formerly higher than at present. They could see that by the tower. The walls of the chancel were new. The foundation dated in the fourteenth century.

MR. PARKER would only supplement what Mr. Freeman had stated. Since he spoke of Dowlish Wake Church the discussion had been criticised. He had been informed that a member of the Speke family rebuilt the Church in the time of James I., 1621 or 1625. He had, therefore, little doubt that the tower was also built at the same time. It was a bad and clumsy imitation of the tower of Kingstone Church. The Gothic of the reign of James I. was comparatively good. The Somersetshire builders went to Wadham College and built a Perpendicular chancel very different from the rest of the College. There were other instances in that neighbourhood which showed that in the time of James I. there was a sort of revival of Gothic architecture.

The REV. W. A. JONES, as Secretary, said that he wished to express on the part of the Society, their obligations to the Local Committee, and to the Rev. J. G. Gowring and Mr. Baker as the Local Secretaries. When they went into any new district much of the success of the Meeting depended upon the services rendered by the Local Committee and Local Secretaries. He expressed the feelings of all the Members of the Society when he said that they were deeply indebted to them for the assistance rendered.

The REV. J. G. GOWRING, in acknowledging the compliment, said that he felt great pleasure in doing what he had done for the Society. As a stranger in the county he thought that it was his duty to promote in every possible way the interests of the town in which he had been called to reside. If he had been successful in promoting the object of the Society the gratification of having done so was sufficient recompense for the trouble he had taken.

MR. BAKER also returned thanks, and expressed the pleasure it gave him to be of any assistance to the Society.

MR. FREEMAN proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Stayner who had so kindly thrown open his house when some of the Members of the Society were compelled to leave the hotel. The Society would have very pleasing reminiscences of the hospitality of the inhabitants of Ilminster, who had received them with open arms.

MR. STAYNER having briefly replied, the visitors returned—some to Wake Hill House, and others to their respective homes.
