

Brushford Church.

After luncheon the party drove to Brushford for the purpose of visiting the church, and a halt was made *en route* to inspect a quarry. Mr. W. A. E. USSHER, F.G.S., described the structure of the quarry, and informed his hearers that the rock was Upper Devonian, called the Pilton beds. The party then proceeded to Brushford Church, where they were received by the Rector, the Rev. CHARLES ST. BARBE SYDENHAM, who read the following Paper :—

“ When I last had the pleasure of welcoming your Society to Brushford Church, some seventeen years since, your Architect, Mr. Ferry, gave the date of the church as Early Perpendicular, I see no reason to dissent from that opinion, unless, indeed, the Tower Arch, which has been opened since that visit, points to an earlier date.

Be that as it may, it is more than probable, I think, that there was a 13th century church on the site of the present building. The font is clearly of that date, as also the parish chest ; and the oak tree in the churchyard cannot be less than 600 years old.

The Font. Of Purbeck marble, square, roughly pannelled. The bowl and base are of the original stone, the central stem and shafts are new. The original supports had been missing, perhaps for centuries, and their place supplied with rough masonry. The font was restored about eight years since, and it is believed correctly, for we had the depression under the bowl, in which the old supports were fixed, to guide us.

Parish Chest. Of oak formed out of the trunk of a single tree, quite devoid of ornament, banded with iron straps, lid slightly rounded. It has three keys, one for the Rector, and one for each Churchwarden.

N.B.—I may remark here in passing, that the Synod of Exeter, 1287, required every parish to provide ‘*Cista ad libros et vestimenta.*’

Oak Tree in Churchyard.—Probably quite 600 years old. From facts which have come to the writer's knowledge, the tree has been in a decaying state for the last 100 years, and it is an accepted theory that an oak takes quite 300 years to reach its full growth. The tree in question measures sixteen feet in circumference at three feet from the ground.

The present Church.—The screen, as you will see, is the chief object of interest, and, subject to correction, I will assign it to the earlier half of the 15th century. It has been much mutilated and defaced, but enough remains to show what a splendid work of art it must have once been. A portion of it appears to have been once used to ornament the pulpit. When and by what hands it was placed here I am unable to say, the Churchwardens' accounts not going back beyond the year 1728; but my own impression is that it was an afterthought, and that it belonged originally to the neighbouring Priory of Barlynch, and was brought here when the Priory was dissolved and its property sold. At any rate it is a matter of history that one of its bells is now in the tower of Dulverton church, and a window in the church of Withiel Florey.

The ascent to the rood-loft was by a staircase in the north wall of the nave, the original archway being still in existence. Some of the steps remain embedded in the wall, but the staircase itself has been destroyed, probably when the north wall was taken down and rebuilt in 1733. This archway was brought to light a few years since when two new windows were placed in the north wall, in lieu of a single square-headed window which existed previously.

The walls of the chancel were taken down and rebuilt in 1872, but the roof and windows were allowed to remain. It is thought that the oak roof under the present ceiling is in a fairly good state, in which case steps will be taken to restore it at no distant date.

The Nave.—The only part of the old roof surviving is the moulded beam extending from the chancel to the tower arch.

All the rest of the roof, under the plaster, is of modern date, and of very rough workmanship.

Windows.—Of the four windows in the nave, three are new; all four are of Early Perpendicular pattern.

The Seats.—Between ten and eleven years ago it was found necessary to re-seat the entire nave. The carved panneling of the bench ends was brought from Highclere, the gift of the late Earl of Carnarvon. As many of the old benches as it was possible to retain in use were placed in the ground floor of the tower.

The Tower.—The stone work of the west window, like that of the east, has not been interfered with. Both are of Early Perpendicular design. The tower was rebuilt, and the tower arch re-opened between ten and eleven years since. Up to that date the arch was filled in with lath and plaster, and an unsightly gallery projected into the nave, almost blocking up the south window. It appears from the Churchwardens' accounts that in 1742 the tower was raised several feet, the bells re-cast and re-hung, and raised with the tower, a fifth bell being added. In course of time the frame-work became loose, and local talent tried to remedy the evil by driving in wedges between the wood-work and the walls, the result being that wide cracks began to shew themselves in the fabric, and the whole structure was in danger of falling, so that it became necessary to take down and re-build a large portion of the west and south walls. This was effected as I said just now, between ten and eleven years since, under the supervision of Mr. Samson, Diocesan Architect, and the tower restored on the old lines, before the so-called improvements of 1742. There are some very quaint lines, copied from a tablet in the old tower, now inscribed on a brass plate inside the tower arch, entitled, "Rules, Orders and Regulations as established at the Belfry of Brushford, the 7th day of June, 1803, by the joint consent of the Ringers and Robert Gooding, Churchwarden."

BELFRY RULES, 1803.

" Let awful silence first proclaimed be,
 " Next, let us praise the Holy Trinity,
 " Then homage pay unto our valiant King,
 " And with a Blessing raise this pleasant ring.
 " Hark ! how the chirping Treble sings it clear
 " And covering Tom comes rolling in the rear ;
 " Now up and set ; let us consult and see
 " What Laws are best to keep sobriety.
 " Then all consent to make this joint decree,
 " Let him who swears or in an angry mood
 " Quarrels, or strikes, altho' he draws no blood,
 " Or wears his hat, or spurs, or turns a Bell,
 " Or by unskilful handling mars a peal,
 " Pay down his sixpence for each separate crime.
 " This caution shall not be effaced by time —
 " But if the Sexton these defaults shall be,
 " From him demand a double penalty.
 " Whoever does our Pastor disrespect
 " Or Warden's order wilfully neglect
 " By one and all be held in foul disgrace,
 " And ever banish'd this harmonious place.
 " Now round let's go with pleasure to the ear
 " And pierce with pleasing sounds the yielding air,
 " And when the Bells are up, then let us sing
 " God save the Church, and bless great George our King."

Dedication.—This church, according to Collinson, is dedicated to St. Nicholas, a statement which is borne out by documents in the Registry at Wells. According to Barr, St. Nicholas was the Patron Saint of Scholars as well as of Sailors, and is represented, as in the east window of this church, with children at his feet.

I will only add further that I have a list of Rectors of this Parish, extracted from the Wells Registry, commencing from the year 1320, together with the names of the Patrons of the Living.

But I am afraid I have detained you longer than I should have done, and I will now ask Mr. Buckle to correct me where he thinks I am wrong."

Mr. EDMUND BUCKLE also said a few words. He ad-

mitted that it was a nice little country church, but putting aside the screen and font, there was nothing of a special character about it. The part of the county that the Society was visiting this year was about the poorest, with in winter a bitterly cold climate. In such a country it was not reasonable to expect that there should have been any great wealth or capacity to spend largely on church decoration. But it should be remembered that they were also a Natural History Society, and they were going through most gorgeous scenery, swarming with birds and animals not common in other parts of the county.

The nave (like that at Hawkridge) was apparently built without any north window, as a protection from the cold; and the oak doorways to the rood loft were noticeable as characteristic of a country where timber was more plentiful than stone. The Purbeck marble font was Early English, and the oak pulpit Perpendicular.

Combe Manor.

After leaving Brushford Church, the party next visited Combe House, on which we are glad to be able to give some notes by Rev. C. ST. BARBE SYDENHAM:—

“This interesting example of a 16th century Manor House, the seat of a branch of the old Somersetshire family of Sydenham, is situated at the head of a picturesque ‘combe’ or valley, a mile south of the little market town of Dulverton.

The house and estate of Combe first came into possession of the Sydenhams, by the marriage, in 1482, of Edward, son of John Sydenham, of Badialton, with Joan, daughter and heiress of Walter Combe, of Combe. His grandson, John Sydenham, of Combe (9th of Elizabeth), purchased of William Babington, Esq., the Manor of Dulverton, with divers lands, hereditaments, etc., in Dulverton and other places.

The present house was probably built towards the close of

Elizabeth's reign. My reason for assigning this date is, that in taking up the floor of the entrance porch some few years since, two medals, struck to commemorate the defeat of the Armada, were found underneath, together with other coins of Elizabeth's reign. That there was an older house standing nearly on the same site, there can be no doubt. A part of it is still in existence, and is used as servants' apartments.

The more recent erection consists of a central building with wings, forming three sides of a square. The main entrance appears to have been through a passage in the east wing, where the cross beams, over what were once two very wide doorways, are still to be seen.

The second doorway opened into the inner court or quadrangle.

In the construction of the house, oak timber, as may be supposed, has been largely used. The stonework in the older buildings is a species of shillett rock, quarried near the house, clay being largely used instead of mortar.

In the later building a better sort of stone was used from a quarry, a little to the north of Dulverton, with plenty of lime and sand. The stone for quoins and dressings appears to have been brought from a quarry near Hawkridge.

It seems worth while to make some mention of the old lead and silver workings which existed here in the early part of the last century, and which were carried on, with more or less success, down to the year 1757, when they ceased.

Specimens of the ore were tested a few years ago at the laboratory in Jermyn Street, and were found to contain 65 % of lead with 4 % of silver.

The writer has, in his possession, a massive silver candlestick made from this ore."

After viewing the house and grounds, the party subsequently returned to Dulverton.

Scale Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch = 1 mile.



BARNICOTT & PEARCE, TAUNTON.

GEOLOGICAL MAP OF THE DULVERTON DISTRICT.

BY W. A. E. USSHER.

Evening Meeting.

The evening meeting was held in the Town Hall, and was presided over by the Rev. Preb. BULLER, in the unavoidable absence of the President.

Mr. USSHER delivered an interesting lecture on the "General Geological Structure of the District" (*see* Part II).