

Reception and Luncheon by the Chard Corporation.

The members afterwards were entertained at luncheon by the Mayor and Corporation of Chard. This gathering was intended as a formal reception of the Society on its visit to Chard, and the function was well carried out in every particular. The Corn Exchange was nicely decorated for the occasion. Most of the members of the Corporation were present, also the members of the local reception committee, and a large number of ladies. The company numbered in all about 150.

In proposing the "health of the Mayor and Corporation of Chard," the PRESIDENT, on behalf of the Society, cordially thanked them for their kind reception and generous hospitality. He was quite sure that the Society would have most pleasant recollections of their visit to Chard.

THE MAYOR, in responding, said the people of Chard thanked the Society for the honour which they had done them in selecting their town for their annual meeting, and he hoped it would be the means of forwarding the claims of the Society.

Parish Church of St. Mary.

After luncheon, the Society, under the guidance of Mr. Francis Harris Mitchell, paid a visit to the Parish Church of St. Mary, Chard. The Church was seen at great disadvantage, as it was in the hands of the masons, who were engaged in replastering the walls, and carrying out some much-needed repairs.

Mr. MITCHELL pointed out what he considered to be the main features of the building. He said he believed there was only one stone left belonging to the original Norman Church. The present building was erected about the year 1400. The Church was restored in 1882, and it was properly restored, none of its old features being destroyed, but, on the contrary, some interesting discoveries were made, and these were still evident. On the south side of the chancel they came upon an archway which probably formed an entrance into the chantry dedicated to St. Katherine. The ceiling of the north transept was a fair specimen of carved oak. The main roof of the Church was raised, at the restoration, to its original pitch. The squints were discovered in 1882, and they could now see the passage to the rood-loft which went right across the Church. Another good work done at the restoration was the opening up of the north and south porches, one of which was formerly used as a vestry, and the font stood in the other. Two additional bells were given at that time by the late Mr. George Trenchard Canning. Mr. Mitchell drew particular attention to the interesting Brewer monument which had just been removed from an obscure position near the organ to the north transept. This monument was to the memory of "William Brewer, of Chard, phisitian, and Deanes, his wife, who, living forty years in happy wedlock, in full age departed this life ; shee dying 8th November, 1614, and hee 24th July, 1618, having issue only six sons and five daughters, all men and women growne, and all comforts to them." The monument was of marble and porphyry; ornamented with angels and other figures, with Corinthian columns on each side supporting a cornice, beneath which, in arched recesses, were effigies of the deceased persons kneeling at a desk, one of the parents on each side, facing each other, and their children, size after size, kneeling in pairs behind them, the males behind their father, and the females behind their mother, all in the quaint costume of the period.

Chard Grammar School

was next reached, Mr. MITCHELL pointing out that the route thereto, through the Old Town, was the oldest part of the Borough, which originated with the grant of 52 acres of land by Bishop Jocelyn in 1206. The Headmaster of the School (the Rev. E. C. Lucette) was unfortunately absent, and the Society were only able to inspect the exterior of the building and that part of it now in use as a schoolroom. It was remarked that there was the date "1583" on the rain-water pipe in the front of the house. The present school was founded in 1671, when "William Symes, of Poundsford, Somerset, Esquire, for certain considerations, conveyed" the burgage, messuage, and tenement now known as the school-house, etc., to twelve trustees to be converted into a Grammar School, and a residence for its master.

Manor Court House.

A move was then made to the interesting building at the rear of the Manor House, both being in the occupation of Mr. Norrington, ironmonger, who uses the hall as a warehouse. Mr. MITCHELL said the room was described by Mr. Green, on the last visit of the Society to Chard, as the Court House of the Manor, in which the lord or his steward sat to receive the customs of the Manor, and where disputes were settled and justice dealt to all. The date was probably about 1580. The ceiling and plastering of the walls was very remarkable. On the left on entering was a representation in plaster of the "Judgment of Solomon;" next was "Justice" with a sword; whilst in the centre was another medallion, representing the three men in the fiery furnace; then there was another female figure reading a book, perhaps the Book of the Law; and then a medallion, representing Daniel in the lions' den. The ceiling was marked out in panels, whose squares or voids were

filled in, in high relief, with curious ornamental figures, such as a hare with the wings and body of a bird; or the beak and wings of a bird on the body of a rabbit; and others were necks of geese, or one neck with three heads, with a leafy branch trailing from mouth to mouth. The other half was different, having fruit, flowers and stars, instead of animals. Over the mantel-piece was a phoenix, the badge of Queen Elizabeth.

Mr. SLOPER said that at Taunton there was a room with a very similar ceiling, of probably the same date. The idea was that it was the work of strolling Italians, and the date was given as 1622.

Mr. BUCKLE said he should think this building was erected at one date.

Membury Church.

A drive of about six miles, through a beautiful country, brought the members to Membury, a small village just over the borders of Somerset and in Devon, and close to the ancient earthworks known as Membury Castle.

An exceedingly interesting statement in regard to the Church was given by the Rev. F. E. W. LANGDON, from whom the visitors received a cordial welcome. He said he was speaking as the deputy of the Vicar of Axminster, Membury being a dependency under Axminster, and had been such from a period anterior to the Conquest, and he thought it was an interesting fact that the connection between the two parishes had remained so long unbroken. It was twenty-two years ago that the Society came to Membury, and at that time some of the interesting features of the Church had not been brought to light, or, for want of an interpreter, were not mentioned. Up to that time—twenty-two years ago—the historians of Devon had all stated that the Church of Membury was built in the XIII Century. They judged from the Early

English chancel. But, at the restoration in 1893, a Norman pillar was brought to light at the west end by the tower, conclusively proving the existence of a Church in Norman times. The pillar was somewhat peculiar, being very short, and he would be glad to have the opinions of experts upon it. In the chancel, Mr. Langdon called attention to the Early English east window with its three lights. There was a window of the same date on the north side, a piscina on the south, and a later window of the Decorated type also on the south. At the restoration in 1893, it was discovered that the old oak roof of the nave was so dilapidated as to be unfit for restoration, and it was replaced by the new roof they saw before them. Some of the old oak was preserved in the parish, and portions of it had been made into alms-boxes and two or three other things. The nave of the Church was somewhat of a puzzle, the tower being entirely out of proportion to it. His own theory was that the Norman Church having been pulled down, an Early English Church was built, the nave of which was succeeded by a Decorated one. In the XIV Century it was decided to pull the whole Church down, and to erect in its stead a Perpendicular building. They began with the tower, and then, for some reason or other, were compelled to stop without carrying out their intentions. Hence the want of proportion before mentioned. The tower itself was a fine one, of which the village was justly proud. During the last five years, a large sum of money had been spent in its restoration, every old feature, so far as was possible, being kept, notably, the very interesting gurgoyles and the parapets of Ham-stone. In the tower there were two bells of the XV Century, cast probably by Robert Norton, of Exeter. One bore the inscription:—"Protege virgo pia quos convoco sancta Maria," and another "Est mihi collatum I.H.S. nomen amatum." He would venture to translate the first:

"Holy Mary, Sainly Virgin, take beneath thy care,
Those who at my summons come to this House of Prayer."

And :

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 “ On me was conferred that title of fame,
 I.H.S., best beloved name.”

As to the other three bells, the tenor bore the date 1638, with the inscription :

“ Hark when I call, prepare your hearts and come
 To the Kingdom of God, and of His Son.”

The fourth bell was cast in 1781, by Pike, of Bridgwater, and the treble in 1727. The north aisle—properly called St. Catherine’s aisle—next claimed their attention. They would see in the Perpendicular window a small piece of the ancient stained glass which had escaped the ravages of time and the Puritans. The recumbent figure was supposed to be—though he did not know upon what authority—a facsimile of that in the Church at Axminster to the memory of Alice, the daughter of Lord Briwere, wife of Reginald de Mohun, Lady of the Manor of Axminster, who died about 1257. If that was so, no doubt her effigy had been placed in the Church of Membury on account of her having a great deal to do with the building of the Early English Church. He threw out the suggestion that the figure might be that of the foundress of the Chapel of St. Catherine. He would like to draw attention to the steps discovered at the restoration in 1893, leading to the rood screen, all traces of which had perished. Across the north aisle there ran originally an oak beam, which was taken down at the restoration and sold to a joiner in the parish, in whose yard he had discovered it when he came to Membury, and after having certain things made out of it for the Church, *e.g.*, the base upon which the font ewer was standing, had the remainder put at the bottom of the tower. He did not know whether the moulding would provide any indication of its date. On one of the steps leading up to the rood screen were seven tiles of an early date found when the Church was restored. Turning to the south aisle, he remarked upon the fine oak roof, and, at its eastern end, the aisle, properly called “The

Chapel of our Lady," which had no doubt been apportioned to the family of Fry, who had in it their private pew in post-reformation times. The south aisle was a Late Perpendicular building, and the date of its erection was probably marked by the head over the south door, which bore an unmistakable likeness to Henry VIII. The monuments in the Yarty aisle were those of the Fry family, who lived at Yarty. They had acquired the property in the reign of Henry IV, by marriage with the heiress of the Yarty's, who possessed it to the end of the first quarter of the XVIII Century, when the heiress married Lord King, and so carried the property into that family, now represented by the Earl of Lovelace. The bust of Frances Fry, the younger sister of Lady King, was worthy of remark. The font was of the Perpendicular type, ornamented with the Tudor rose, and, he should imagine, of the same date as the south aisle. It might be interesting to know that the churchyard or cemetery—to use a mediæval and more appropriate title—was consecrated on the 22nd July, 1316, by Walter Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter, and an account of the proceedings was still existent, a translation of the same being now posted up in the porch. It was curious and amusing to notice the care with which the Bishop asserted that he had no intention to interfere with any of the rights to the tithes and offerings possessed by the Vicar of Axminster. Amongst the names of the principal parishioners recorded on that occasion as having met the Bishop was Simon de Yarty, an ancestor of the Fry's on the maternal side. In the old days Membury was well provided with Chapels-of-ease. There was one on the north side of the parish, its site being marked by a field called Church Yard; another on the eastern side at Chapel Croft, where a chapel had been licensed for divine service in the XIV Century by Bishop Grandisson; and another at Court Farm, considerable remains of which still existed. He had had the old window photographed, it being a fine one of the Decorated period. He would like some expert to tell him the date

of the chalice, with its cover, used as a paten. Then there were the old registers, a copy of the first fifty years being contained in a volume (1637-1687) which would repay perusal; the volume had been copied by Mr. Cornish, of Axminster. In it were several quaint entries. One, in 1648, recorded the marriage of Charles Napier, of Puncknoll, in the County of Dorset, to Priscilla Hornando, of the parish of Loockout, in the County of Utopia, with the words "month Zif" written in the margin. Another entry recorded that John Diskitt and Ann Lyd had been married in the Church on the day the traitor Monmouth landed at Lyme, and it was added that the officiating priest—Vicar Crabb, of Axminster—would wear no surplice, "a great irregularity, if not the infallible signe of a phanaticke. *Similis, simili gaudet.*" He had also upon the table a copy of a book in the possession of a member of the Society of Friends at Bridport, containing entries, during the XVII and XVIII Centuries, of the births, marriages and deaths in the Society of Friends at Membury. Other entries of their burials were found in the Church register, which seemed curious. He was sorry to say that the old meeting house had been converted into a cottage and blacksmith's forge, but the old burial ground still remained. Among the monuments was that of Sir Shilston Calmady, who was killed during a skirmish between the detachment which he commanded of the Parliamentary troops and the Royalists, during the civil wars in 1645. As regarded the Church as a whole, he thought the villagers might be proud of the fact that in the ten years between 1893 and 1903, a sum of something like £2,500 had been spent on its restoration, which showed that the same zeal and enthusiasm which animated their forefathers in the erection of the present noble building, still dwelt in their descendants.

Col. BRAMBLE pointed out that near the western end of the south arcade there had been recently exposed to view, on opening the north face of the wall, a portion of a Norman shaft with base and a fluted cushion capital. These were,

apparently, the only existing remains of Norman work, and they were evidently *in situ*. Some difficulty had been expressed in accounting for them in this position, and he ventured to offer the following suggestions :

The shaft was, he believed, that of a respond only. The only place it could have occupied in a small Church would have been on the south side of a chancel arch. How could it now be found near the west end of the Church? His suggestion was, that the whole of the nave of the original Norman Church stood west of the existing nave, almost upon the site of the XV Century tower. When in XIII Century times it was determined to rebuild the Church the chancel was pulled down, probably leaving the nave standing. A new nave and chancel were then erected entirely east of the Norman nave. In doing this the south respond, and probably a portion of the south wall (since replaced by the Arcade), were simply used as a piece of building material *in situ*. But the Norman chancel would have been much narrower than the new nave, and the northern respond and wall were necessarily pulled down and the wall rebuilt some feet further to the north. On the completion of the new church the Norman nave might have been retained for a time as a Narthex or western porch. But then, or later, it was pulled down and the western tower erected on, or partially on, its site.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER thanked Mr. Langdon for his interesting account of the church, and the reverend gentleman was also cordially thanked for his kindness in entertaining the visitors to tea in the schoolroom.

Fry of Yarty.

Before leaving the Church, Mr. E. A. FRY, of Birmingham, read a paper respecting the family of Fry, formerly resident at Yarty, and referred to in Mr. Langdon's address. (The Paper is given in Part II).

The annual dinner took place afterwards at the George Hotel, the PRESIDENT in the Chair, and following this there was an

Evening Meeting

at the Corn Exchange, for the reading of papers and discussion thereon. The PRESIDENT occupied the chair, and, in the absence of the author, the Rev. F. W. Weaver, read an exhaustive and instructive paper on "Somerset or Somersetshire," by Sir Edward Fry, which is printed in Part II, p. 1., *et seq.*

The Rev. Preb. G. E. SMITH said their Society was an educational one, and this was a question which they should seek to settle one way or the other. He could not profess to add anything to the argument more than to point out that the use of the word "Somersetshire" was of long standing, and one to which they were accustomed.

Mr. E. SLOPER also favoured the use of the word "Somersetshire."

"Old Chard" and the Selwood Family.

Mr. WEAVER said there were two points which he had noted down before this meeting which he thought would be interesting to the people of Chard. The first was with regard to the probable age of some of the present buildings in the town. He found that on February 26th, 1578, there was a great fire in Chard, and in Strype's *Life of Archbishop Grindal* it was shown that a brief was issued and sent to every Bishop in the kingdom, "for the new building and setting up of the town of Chard, the chiefest and greatest part whereof was lately wasted by fire." This reference was valuable, because it might suggest a possible date for some of those interesting buildings which they had visited that day. The second point was that

Chard was known as the residence of the celebrated and widely-known family of Selwood, who apparently took their name from the Forest of Selwood. John de Selwode was Abbot of Glastonbury, 1457-93, and there were in existence the wills of the following members of this family of Chard:—1494, Nicholas Selwood; 1530, Robert Selewod; 1560, John Selwood; 1604, Phillabath Selwood; 1677, William Selwood; 1689, Abraham Selwood; 1692, Ann Selwood; 1694, Henry Selwood. The first of these wills was at Somerset House; the rest were in the District Probate Registry at Wells. The name seemed to have quite died out at Chard.

Mr. E. SLOPER said he was perfectly certain that Chard was a borough before the Conquest. They had here a Silver Street, where there was almost certainly a mint. That day some of them had examined some of the old documents in the local Museum, and they found the early charter alluded to by Mr. Green, which was granted in the reign of Queen Anne, at which time the borough was well known. In this charter mention was made of a bishop's palace, and probably one of the old buildings on the Cornhill which they had seen—very probably what was called the old court-house—was an episcopal residence.

Snowdon Hill Quarry, Chard.

Mr. A. J. JUKES BROWNE, F.G.S., contributed a note on the Snowdon Hill Quarry, which was read by Mr. St. George Gray, and is embodied in the author's paper on "The Geology of Chard" in Part II.