

The Presidential Address.

MR. A. F. SOMERVILLE then delivered his address. He said :

In the first place allow me to thank you for the high honour you have done me, by your request that I should preside over our Annual Meeting to-day, an honour which I highly appreciate, though at the same time I am fully cognisant of the absence of those qualifications which are necessary for the holder of the office of President of a Society, which for now nearly 60 years has done so much towards building up the history of our County, the preservation of its ancient landmarks, the extension of our knowledge of its geological features, and the widening of our research into its botanical treasures.

On the roll of your Presidents appear the names of many, who were, or still are, competent to speak with authority ; there may be, too, a few others who, like myself, have come to sit at the feet of the Gamaliels who, in their turn, are to be found for a few short minutes sitting below the President's chair. But, whether they be the teachers or the students, you may rest assured that your Presidents are one and all alike animated with an equal desire to promote to the best of their ability the interests and well-being of the Society.

Before touching upon any of the subjects immediately con-

nected with our visit to Shepton, I may be allowed to refer to a matter which I feel sure must be of the greatest interest to all present here to-day. June 6th, 1907, will be hereafter a red-letter day in our calendar, denoting the date on which the Bishop of this Diocese, through the generous terms offered him by a newly elected member of this Society, acquired, on behalf of the Church of England, the stately ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. For some 370 years this spot, hallowed by sacred memories, revered not only by the men of Somerset, nor only by Englishmen, but by Christians throughout the wide world, has been alienated from the ancient church of which we may say it was the Guardian Angel when hordes of pagans swept from off British soil all, or nearly all, traces of Christian worship. Now it is restored once more to a place of honour amongst the memorials of our Ancient Church and will be hereafter treated with a reverent care, such as no lay owner could be expected to extend to it.

The early legends and poetic traditions, which hover around those grey old ruins, are like the November mists and fogs which sweep silently over the moorlands up to the Isle of Avalon, blotting out the landscape, save here and there, leaving us in a world of ghostly mystery. We know that below is the firm soil, and that the white winged spectres, which our fancy creates out of the curling mist, will fade away when the sun bursts forth again, and that the hidden landscape will reappear. The stern historian analyses and discards the tradition and legendary lore; he cannot see below them; for him there is no sun except the light of documentary evidence. But most of us have an innate, it may be childlike, faith in that hidden landscape, and we shall continue to believe, in spite of our stern historian's warnings and rebukes, that in Glastonbury we have a link with the earliest history of the British Church, an unbroken link connecting the Church of to-day with the Church of the first century.

To whom the charge of the Abbey will be entrusted and

what will be done to secure the ruins from further decay will be a matter for anxious consideration ; but we can rest assured that this matter is in safe hands, and we can congratulate ourselves, as well as the Bishop of the Diocese, on the success of his appeal for contributions to the purchase fund, and we ought I think to express our deep sense of gratitude to his Lordship for both seizing the opportunity offered him to acquire this property, and for the immense amount of time and energy devoted by him to the obtaining of the necessary promises of support which enabled him to accept the generous terms then offered.

And now let me welcome you to this Ancient Town of Shepton Malet. How long it has been a town, and when it ceased to be a hamlet of Pilton, I have failed to discover. In its earliest days it had not reached a position of sufficient importance to give its name to the stream which flows through the valley, on the banks of which the town was built. The modern name of that stream, "The Sheppey," was a product of the Vandals at the Survey Office some twenty years ago. And here I must protest against such a wanton alteration of an ancient landmark. The late Bishop Hobhouse entered a strong protest at the time this stream was re-named, and at his request I made a special visit to Bristol to interview the Royal Engineer Officer in charge of this district. He told me that he had been informed by three residents at Shepton that the stream was called "The Sheppey." I might add that neither of these gentlemen, whose names were given me, could by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as a reliable authority. I begged him to refer the matter to our Society but this he declined to do. In King Ine's Charter 702 A.D. "The Dulting River" is the name given to this stream. Leland called it the "Coscomb Broke" and the "Coscombe Water"—at that time Croscombe was an important manufacturing town with Markets and Fairs. I always heard it called "The Croscombe Stream," and in some legal proceedings connected with this

stream in 1894, when the good people of Shepton had the misfortune to differ with me on a question of the impurity of the water, while their solicitor dubbed it "The Sheppey," I invariably called it "The Croscombe Stream," and I might add "The Croscombe Stream" then won the day.

"Shepton Malet" owes no doubt its first name to the sheep whose wool built up its future prosperity: the second name is connected with the great family of Malet, who owned such large estates in Somerset and Devon in the Norman period. William Malet held the Manor of Shepton of the Abbot of Glastonbury in 1166 A.D., though it is not quite certain at which exact date or how the Malet family came into possession of this Manor. His son, another William Malet, succeeded in 1196 A.D., and on his death the Malet possessions were divided between his two daughters, co-heiresses, the elder of whom Mabel married Hugh de Vivonne and succeeded to, inter alia, the Shepton Manor. Though for a short time after this the Manor bore the name of Shepton Vivonne, the earlier name prevailed and has since remained. The further history of this Manor, and how it ultimately became part of the Duchy of Cornwall, is set out in a Memorandum on the history of this Manor prepared by Sir H. C. Maxwell Lyte, K.C.B., the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, and will, with a similar Memorandum on the Manor of Croscombe by the same author, be printed with this year's *Proceedings* of our Society.

Passing now to a consideration of the district we are about to visit, there are features connected with it which seem to make it one of the most interesting in this County. The Geologist, Botanist, Archæologist and Historian can each find subjects worthy of his attention. In his "Reverie on the Mendips" Professor Lloyd Morgan takes us back to an age when the Mendip Hills, once mighty mountains, were being built up by those tiny denizens of the clear blue sea which overlay the older red sandstone. Now that new terror, which threatens to destroy the charm and peace of rural life, has

compelled us to investigate a far older formation, than even the old red sandstone, in search of a harder stone for our roads, and, by calling to our aid the ghosts of extinct volcanoes, we hope to lay that dust fiend which the XX Century motor car has raised.

In connection with the geological features of the Mendips I desire to call the attention of the members of this Society to the very excellent work done by Mr. H. E. Balch of Wells, the recognised authority on the Caves of Mendip, whose able paper, "Ancient Denizens of Mendip," which was read before the "Shepton Mallet Natural History Society" in April, 1904, should be read by everyone who takes an interest in and seeks further information on this subject.

Passing now to later geological formations, we have close by the splendid beds of oolite at Doultling, and there is another valuable building stone, a Liassic conglomerate, locally known as Bastard Free Stone, to be also found in this neighbourhood. This stone is far harder than the Doultling stone, weathers better, and with age obtains a beautiful soft grey tint. It was used for some of the older work of Wells Cathedral. Dinder and Croscombe churches were entirely built of this stone, and so too was the greater part of Shepton church. When used for the Cathedral it was quarried from the Chilcote Manor and in consequence was known as the Chilcote Stone. In a XV Century will it is called "Croscombe Stone," the Croscombe Church having been lately re-built of this stone. There are fine beds of a hard white lias, a blue lias, and dolomitic conglomerate, and, near Croscombe, an old sea beach forms a fine cliff facing the main road. The coal measures, so well known on the north side of the Mendips, extend, so geologists tell us, on the southern side for a considerable distance, and some day our peaceful rural villages may become centres of an important mining industry.

On Dulcote Hill there is a remarkable "fault" which Professor Boyd Dawkins once pointed out to me, and on the

shoulder near Dinder are to be found traces of Millstone Grit.

The Botanist is much indebted to the local Natural History Society which for the past seven or eight years has investigated the flora of the neighbourhood. Rare plants are to be found here, but their habitat we keep secret lest there be too many inquirers after them, and their existence be here, as has been the case elsewhere, but a memory of the past.

The Archæologist may, under the guidance of our Assistant-Secretary, Mr. St. George Gray, explore the camps of races whose history has to be built up out of earthworks, pieces of pottery and a few other mementoes of a bygone age. In Dinder Wood there is a cave shelter, pronounced by Professor Boyd Dawkins to be the resting-place of a "longhead chieftain," and not far off I picked up a small stone axe of a later period. In the local Museum, thanks to the generosity of the late Mr. Phillis, can be seen many mementoes of Roman occupation at Shepton, but we regret the disappearance of the "Potter's Kiln" which was shown to the Society at their visit to Shepton in 1865, and the site of the Roman Villa near the Charlton Railway Station. The Fosse Road is, however, still with us, an interesting paper on which, written by Mr. J. McMurtrie, was read to the Society at their second visit to Shepton in 1884.

Some of the churches and places on our programme were the objects of excursions by the Society in 1878, and 1884. Others, such as Dinder, Croscombe, Pilton and Maesbury, have not been visited since 1865. You have an attractive programme, and if in addition your indefatigable secretaries have provided fine weather, the members will, I think, agree with me that they have left nothing more to be desired.

I now pass to a subject which should appeal to the historian, a subject which perhaps has not received the attention it deserves; there will be probably nothing new to many present in the following remarks on this subject, but it may induce

some far more capable than myself to make a further study of it.

Wool and the trade in Woollen goods were for many centuries the chief source of the National Wealth and had an important bearing on our domestic, political and economic history.

At the beginning of the XVII Century exports of wool and woollen goods represented two-thirds of the exports from English ports.

To the munificence of wealthy traders in this commodity do we owe the building of so many stately Church Towers and the rebuilding of Churches between the end of the XIV and the beginning of the XVI Centuries.

The subject may be considered under three heads: Wool; the craftsman who manufactured woollen goods; and the trader who sold them.

These Mendip Hills must have carried many thousands of sheep whose wool not only supplied the local demand but also the foreign market. What the breed of sheep was I have failed to discover but it was a well known and distinct breed at the commencement of the XIX Century. How the flocks were owned, by individuals or as a sort of common flock by the parish I cannot find out. There are some interesting entries in the Croscombe Churchwardens' accounts of the letting of sheep by the Wardens, the rents being applied for Church expenses.

In the Churchwardens' accounts, dated 16 January 1525, we find the following:

“John Felyppes and Jone his wife gave 6 ewes and 3 rings of Silver. The which ewe sheep hath (been) delivered unto Hugh Morgan for the space of 7 years: the said Hugh for to pay by the year the sum of 2 shillings to pay it at the Court day—[when the Churchwardens' accounts were made up]—If so be any of these sheep doth die on ‘myush’ the s^d Hugh pay for them 16 pence apiece, the sheep be of the age of 4

years all of one age the said Hugh for to deliver at the 7 year end the sheep or else 8 shillings."

This is interesting in showing the value of sheep and that the wool gave a net profit of more than 25 per cent on the value of the sheep.

In Saxon times, and for some time after, there appears to have been no separate craft of weavers, no mention of them appearing in Domesday. Probably at that time each family made its own woollen cloth and garments in the long winter evenings. The earliest mention of a Guild of Weavers is to be found in a Pipe Roll of Henry I, 31st year, 1130 A.D., which records payments to the King by the Guilds of Weavers of London, Lincoln and Oxford. Later Pipe Rolls show the existence of Guilds of Weavers in Winchester, Huntingdon, Nottingham and York and a Guild of Fullers at Winchester.

These Guilds were not called into existence by the Crown, but were originally voluntary combinations of workmen, and subsequently compelled to obtain royal authorisation for their existence and to pay an annual tax.

Henry II granted charters to the Weavers of London and York, but the only definite provision made by these charters was that which obliged all the men of the craft in each particular district to belong to the Guild: whatever other rights the Guild possessed had grown up by custom and were confirmed by their recognition by the Crown.

Contemporaneously with the rise of the Craftsmen's Guilds we find the formation of Merchants' Guilds, which, like the former were at first mere voluntary combinations, and subsequently received recognition by and authority from the Crown, which granted them charters confirming their rights and liberties.

While the object of the Craftsman Guild was to control the craft to which they belonged, that of the Merchants was to secure a monopoly of the trade of the district.

At an early date the functions of the Court Leet must have

been transferred to and amalgamated with these Merchants' Guilds, which thus became the foundations of Municipal Government. The Merchant Guild, therefore, represented the aristocracy of the town, and kept a jealous eye on the combinations of the democratic craftsmen. The latter could not become freemen unless they gave up their trade, and they were harassed in their trade by vexatious restrictions put upon them by the Merchants' Guilds.

At Marlborough, *temp.* Edward I, 1278, A.D., we find that no one was allowed to weave or work save for the goodmen, *i.e.* the burgesses of the town. At Leicester, not only were the weavers allowed to work for none other than the men of Leicester, but a rate per pound was fixed for the cloth made. Dyers were restricted from dyeing, except with woad, and no Fuller was allowed to sell cloth except that dyed with woad, while at the same time we find the burgesses of various towns making payments to the Crown for permission to sell cloth dyed in other hues, which meant cloth of Flemish manufacture.

But it was not only by the Merchants' Guilds that the craftsman was restricted in his liberty, the size of cloth was regulated by the Crown. In 1197 the "Assize of Measures" laid down that all woollen cloths, whenever they were made, should be of the same width, two ells within the lists, and of the same goodness in the middle and sides. This Assize was recognized as a protection to the public by its being re-enacted in Magna Charta.

Amongst the entries in Vol. XI of the Somerset Record Society, "Somerset Pleas," we find that persons were fined by the Justices, in 1242-3, A.D., for selling cloth against the Assize, at Taunton, Redcliffe, Bridgwater, Crewkerne and Ilchester. This shows how the trade was at that date spread over this county, and it is also worthy of notice that amongst those fined were "Tailors and Dyers," which fact rather seems to indicate that at this period the craftsmen of this county were not restricted in their right to sell cloth, as was the case

elsewhere. In this same volume we find mention made of Weavers, Fullers, Dyers, Tailors and Drapers, showing that the craft had been organized under several branches; and, though I have failed to find any evidence of the existence of Guilds in this county at that time, I think we may assume that each branch had here, as elsewhere, its separate Guild.

In the reign of Edward I an officer was appointed to have custody of "Aulnage" and of the Assize of Cloth,—an office which actually lasted till the reign of William III: cloth not of due size was subject to forfeiture. In 1353, owing to the importation of foreign weavers, their freedom from many of the restrictions put upon the home craftsmen, and the large increase in the manufacture of cloth, the King's "Aulnager" was directed to merely mark the cloth so that the buyer might know what the actual measurements were, and the former restrictions as to uniform size were removed.

The cloth made in England in the XII, XIII, and early part of the XIV Centuries was of a rough character—a frieze, and either white or dyed with woad. In Flanders, to which English wool was largely exported, finer cloths of varied hues and textures were made; and, just as now ladies send to Paris for their hats and gowns, so the "smart" people of the XIII Century either sent to Flanders for their clothes or bought Flemish material with which to make them. This led to protests by the Guilds of Craftsmen,—the Tariff reformers of that day—and partly owing to this, and partly too for political reasons, measures were from time to time taken to prevent the importation of foreign cloths and the exportation of our wool upon which Flanders depended for its woollen manufactures.

Edward III saw, however, that the only way to deal with such a dangerous competitor as Flanders was to instruct our own people in the making of similar goods, not only for home consumption but also for export. Accordingly in 1331 he issued a letter of protection to one John Kempe of Flanders, weaver of woollen cloths, who had been induced to come and settle

in England; in 1336 similar letters were issued to two weavers of Brabant settled at York, and in 1337 fifteen other Flemish weavers received similar letters of protection. These foreigners were exempted from the restrictions imposed upon English makers and were not compelled to enter a Guild. They were dispersed over various parts of England and by this means there gradually grew up in several counties special makes of different classes of woollen goods; for instance, at Norwich, Fustians; at Sudbury (Suffolk), Baize; Colchester, Says and Serges; Devon, Kerseys; Kent, Broad Cloth; Worcester, Gloucester, Kendal, Halifax, Hants, Berks and Sussex, various kinds of Cloths; while at Taunton, to which some of the earliest arrivals of Flemings came, sprang up a trade in Serge known throughout Europe in the XVI and XVII Centuries as "Taunton Serges," and, though this Serge is no longer made at Taunton, its manufacture and reputation is still kept up at the well known factories at Wellington close by. "West Country plain Cloths" were first mentioned in 13 Rich. II (1390), and their dimensions settled.

In Somerset Wills of the next century we find mention made of a great variety of cloths showing how the trade had expanded. Frieze was still being made for the working classes.

This century was a time of great prosperity, and much money was spent on the rebuilding of churches which had fallen into disrepair during the stagnation in trade and depression caused by the long wars and the "Black Death." Croscombe Church was rebuilt at this time. On two of the bosses in the nave roof of this Church may be seen figures of a man and a woman kneeling with rolls of cloth like scrolls round the edges: no doubt denoting the benefactions of some wealthy clothiers, the Mayows, Denshylls or Bisses who were then living at Croscombe.

Shepton Mallet Church, whose magnificent roof is perhaps the finest example of its kind, was a rather later restoration than Croscombe, but if we had the records of its rebuilding

we should find on them the names of wealthy clothiers. The Crosecombe churchwardens' accounts of this period throw some light on this subject of the woollen trade, for we find that there were at that time several Guilds in the town, including one of "Webbers" and another of "Tuckers." These Guilds used to take part in the Church processions and make annual gifts to the Church through the churchwardens and no doubt also assisted the Church's revenue by a copious consumption of the "Church ale," which latter self-imposed task is kept alive by their successors the village clubmen of to-day, with this difference that it is not the Church which derives any benefit from the amount of ale consumed on those occasions.

In Vol. XXVI of the *Proceedings* of our Society there is an interesting paper by Mr. Green on the Settlement of some Flemish Weavers at Glastonbury in 1551. They were given lodgings in a part of the dismantled Abbey buildings but they only remained a short time in this country. The cloth they made was called "Saye" of which there were two kinds; one of wool, a species of light serge, the other of silk. If this 'Saye' was of silk it is the first mention of the introduction into the West of an industry which in later times became an important one.

Foreign wars much affected the woollen trade, which had by this time acquired a large connection on the continent, and we find that there was great depression during the war with Spain, one of our best customers in Henry VIII's reign.

We are told that at that time there was no sale for cloth at Blackwell (or Bakewell) Hall. This place had been fixed in the XV Century for the sale of woollen goods brought to London by country traders. It is interesting to note that on its site is the present great Wool Mart in Basinghall Street where all our Colonial and sea borne wool is sold by auction.

Trade revived again in Edward VI reign and we then find Taunton holding a very important position as a manufacturing centre, its trade in woollen goods being almost equal to that of

Bristol. Trade became again depressed in 1564, through the Government of the Netherlands prohibiting the importation of English cloths. And about this time we see a second immigration of Flemish weavers into England, some 30,000 or so coming to these shores to escape the inhuman cruelties of the Duke of Alva.

Trade went on increasing rapidly during the XVII Century, checked for a time by the war with Spain, in 1655. In Stow's "Survey of London" there is a very interesting table of fees charged for "hallage," that is the "pitching" of woollen goods at Blackwell Hall for sale, and the rates for porters, giving a long list of different makes of cloth and woollen articles, and showing how these goods came from Yorkshire, Lancashire and other parts of England and Wales in horse packs. This table was drawn up by an order of Common Council, London, in 1665, and Stow remarks: "Cloth is the great Staple Merchandize of England." At the commencement of the XVIII Century we find that in Taunton alone over 8,500 persons were employed in making the Taunton Serges.

A little over a century later there were only some ten or twelve looms at work there, and only six or eight persons employed as wool-combers.

Gradually the great clothing trade in the West has passed away, one cause being that here the manufacturers did not keep pace with the times as did the men in the North by the introduction of spinning and other machinery.

A few old people still remain in this neighbourhood who can remember cloth and silk mills at Shepton and Croscombe, and a hat factory at the latter which had a local reputation. I can myself remember the last silk mill at work at Croscombe and a few weavers' looms in the cottages.

There is, however, a thriving velvet factory at Bowlish, a hamlet of Shepton, and there are some indications that at some future time Shepton may regain its position as a manufacturing centre.

Still, our old churches, some interesting old houses and charities, remain to tell us of a prosperity which has now passed away.

I fear that I may have somewhat wearied you with a subject which may perhaps be considered as only indirectly connected with the work of our Society, but it is a subject which in abler hands might throw more light on the life of our West Country folk in the Middle Ages.

The DEAN OF WELLS proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his address. He had given them a most interesting account of the woollen trade of the county, and had treated the subject in a luminous and exhaustive manner.

The REV. C. W. WHISTLER seconded the motion, which was carried with acclamation, the President responding.

Mr. Bates announced that in the forthcoming volume of the Record Society there would be found a great deal about the old woollen trade of Somerset.

This concluded the business meeting ; and the company then adjourned to the George Hotel, where luncheon was partaken of, the President presiding.

Shepton Mallet Church.

After luncheon the members proceeded to the Church, which was described by Dr. F. J. ALLEN, of whose remarks the following is a summary :—This Church has suffered severely from vandalism, both at the Reformation and during the Victorian period ; but the parts of the old fabric that remain are of more than ordinary interest. These include the Transition-Norman nave arcade, the Early-English chancel arch and piscina, the Early-Perpendicular tower, and the Late-Perpendicular oak ceiling and stone pulpit. The Transition-Norman arcade was inserted into earlier walls, whose form and dimensions suggest an Anglo-Saxon origin. The tower is of interest as being the earliest extant of the great towers of Somerset. The carved





MEDIEVAL SHAMBLES AT SHEPTON MALLET:
GENERAL VIEW.



THE SHAMBLES AT SHEPTON MALLET:
INTERNAL STRUCTURE.

From Photographs by Dr F. J. Allen.

oak ceiling is by far the finest specimen of the wagon-head form in existence, having 350 carved panels, all of different designs, and more than 350 elaborate bosses or rosettes, no two alike; also 36 angels as supporters, and other accessory details.

A full account of the Church, with several illustrations, will be found in Part II.

The Shambles and Market Cross.

On leaving the Church the members visited the Market Place, where the Shambles and the Cross were described by Dr. ALLEN as follows:—The Shambles are the rarest curiosity that Shepton possesses, as they are apparently the last mediæval shambles remaining in England. Judging by the curved oaken timbers used in their roof, the date of building was the middle of the XV Century. The same curved timbers are used in other roofs of that period in the neighbourhood, *e.g.*, the Douling tithe-barn.

It is to be regretted that these shambles are now so decayed that they cannot be expected to last much longer. They were used until a few years ago for the sale of meat; and the oldest inhabitants can remember that there was formerly another row of shambles on the opposite side of the market place, and that many cartloads of meat were sold here weekly.

The Market Cross (*see* Frontispiece), as recorded on the original brass plate attached to it, was built in A.D. 1500. The lower portion or shelter remains as then built, except for slight repairs; but the upper portion was reconstructed in 1841 under the direction of G. B. Manners of Bath, architect. Only the upper third of the spire seems to have been altered. It is said to have been originally capped with a very large stone, carved with figures under canopies. This being top-heavy, fell in the XVIII Century,* damaging the adjacent work, hence

* Though it is not recorded, it seems possible that the fall of this "idolatrous" ornament may have been partly due to injury inflicted by the reformers.—F. J. A.

the reconstruction of 1841. The present slender finial designed by Manners is probably more pleasing in form than the heavy one which it replaced.

Pooley in his book *The Old Stone Crosses of Somerset* is mistaken in saying that the whole cross was rebuilt in 1841. My grandfather was one of the Trustees of the Cross at that time, and my relatives could distinctly remember that only the spire above the roof was rebuilt. The old print of the cross, which Pooley reproduced, is evidently from an unskilled and incorrect drawing such as was common a century or so ago.

Pooley, Farbrother, and all guide books and directories, give incorrect copies of the Founders' inscription. The true wording is as follows:—

(Photographic copy).

Of yo charyte pray for the soules of Walter bukland & Agnys hys
wyff w^t whoys good^s thys Crosse was made in the yere of o' lord god
da 15^o whoys obbytt shalbe kepte for Eber in thys parisshe Church of
Shepton Mallett y xxviii day of November whoys soules Jhu pardon

(Transliteration).

Of yo charyte pray for the soules of Walter bukland &
Agnys hys wyff w^t whoys good^s thys Crosse was made
in the yere of o' lord god m[&]bc whoys obbytt shalbe kepte
for Eber in thys parisshe Church of Shepton Mallett y
xxviii day of November whoys soules Jhu pardon.

(Notice the method of writing the date 1500,—M[&]V^o, with a tiny “&” over the M.)

There are certain lands, apparently a part of the Bucklands' bequest, the revenues of which are devoted to keeping the cross in repair, any surplus being distributed among the poor. This “Cross Charity” was formerly administered by trustees, but has recently been transferred to the Urban Council. The



MARKET PLACE, SHEPTON MALLET, IN 1882.

From a Photograph by Dr. F. J. Allen.



MODERN SHAMBLES AND PART OF ANCIENT ONES,
SHEPTON MALLET. (ABOUT 1885.)

From a Photograph by F. C. D. Hurd, Shepton Mallet.

title deeds have long been lost ; and some years ago the Charity Commissioners were inclined to divorce the property from the Cross. Happily their intention was relinquished, otherwise the Cross might have been left to decay like the Shambles. It speaks well for the honesty of the Cross Trustees that in the absence of title deeds they still used the property for the right purpose, and from 1841 onwards (if not before) kept the Cross in thorough repair.*

The REV. D. M. ROSS stated that it was only lately that the old shambles at Langport had been removed.

Dulcote Hill and Quarries.

The members then drove to Dulcote Hill for the sake of the fine views and geological features. Some rain having fallen, most of the party remained in the carriages when the hill was reached ; but those who walked along the ridge of the hill had fine weather, though without sunshine. The air was very clear, the landscape being visible even as far as the Countisbury Foreland, fifty miles distant.

Standing on the hill above the quarry, DR. F. J. ALLEN pointed out that the Mendip Hills consisted of an upward fold or anticlinal of Carboniferous limestone resting on Old Red sandstone ; that Dulcote Hill, on which the party was standing, was part of a smaller anticlinal parallel to the main one. The folding at Dulcote had been very sharp, and the crushing very complete, so that the limestone (as was evident in the quarry) had been broken up into fragments of all sizes, and these had been subsequently cemented together with crystalline carbonate of lime, or calspar, deposited by percolating water.

Dr. Allen also pointed out the position of the Dolomitic Conglomerate at the foot of the limestone hills.

* For further information on the Cross Charity see the late Mr. H. Heard's *Shepton Mallet Charities*, published by Byrt and Son, Shepton Mallet, 1903.

MR. A. F. SOMERVILLE said that at the west end of Dulcote Hill was a remarkable fault ; also a cavern, on the floor of which was found a large quantity of bones, some of which could be seen in the Wells Museum. There had been found the jaws, several teeth, the thigh bone, and other parts of the cave bear ; some traces of the hyæna, the horse, the bison, several reindeer, and foxes. Not a single tooth-mark had been found on the bones, showing that the animals could not have been devoured by beasts of prey.

Dinder Church.

Descending the hill, the party were soon at Dinder House, the residence of the President, where those who remained in the carriages had arrived some time before.

At Dinder Church the PRESIDENT read the following paper :

On the occasion of the last visit of our Society to Shepton Mallet a very interesting and able paper on "The Prebend of Dinder" was contributed by Canon Church, F.S.A. In that he tells us that Dinder signifies the "Valley of the Stream," its old form of spelling being "Denren"—"Den," valley, and "Ren" (or "Rhyne"), a watercourse. Whether or not there was a church here in Saxon days we cannot say.* Some authorities put the age of the grand old churchyard yew, which measures rather over thirty-one feet in circumference three feet from the ground, at close on 1,200 years, which would take us back to Aldhelm ; and possibly Dinder may have been visited by the Douling brethren. The present Church we may say belongs to five different periods.

* When the old chancel was removed in 1871 and the chancel arch rebuilt of the old stones, some portions of a still earlier arch were discovered built into the chancel arch. Unfortunately no reliable record has been kept, but it was thought at the time that the work was Saxon, and that the chancel occupied the site of a small Saxon chapel.

The south and portions of the east and west walls of the nave belong to the earliest and are late Norman, probably at the end of the XII Century.

We know that in 1223 William Flander de "Dyne" gave the advowson of the Church to Bishop Jocelin, and he or one of his family may have been the builder. You will observe on the outside that there is neither plinth nor stringcourse to these walls, and I should like to point out to you the four consecration crosses, two to the east and two to the west of the porch in the south wall, and a fifth cross in the north corner of the south wall, close to the tower steps where nave and aisle meet. On the west corner of the south wall there is an ancient sundial. To the same period belong the two dragon heads and portions of dog's tooth and ball-pattern moulding of an arch which are now placed over the small chancel window near the chancel steps, but which must at some period have formed part of a Norman entrance doorway.

The south chancel windows, which were taken out of the old chancel when the present one was rebuilt in 1871, the piscina in the chancel, possibly the base of the font, and the churchyard cross (except the modern shaft) belong to the next period, early XIV Century.

Some seventy or eighty years later a great alteration was made; the north wall of the nave was replaced by an arcade and the aisle and porch were added. It is interesting to note that the old stones of this north wall were utilized in building the walls of the aisle, for over the north doorway can be seen traces of an ancient doorway and a stone with a consecration cross. The latter has been placed in a horizontal position, though it must originally have had a vertical position in the wall from which it was removed. This seems to denote that consecration crosses had at this time gone out of fashion. There are remains of an old "stoop" which may also have been in the old Norman wall. Inside the porch, before the 1871 restoration, there was a niche over the entrance door to

the Church and a "stoop" in the north-east angle; both were much mutilated and unfortunately they were not considered of sufficient value to be retained. To the same period belong, I would suggest, the windows of the nave and aisle (except the west window of the aisle which appears to be later and is similar to the west window in the tower) and the east window of the chancel.

In 1370 John de Rodeney bought the Manor of Dinder from John and Margaret Fitz Payn for 100 mares, and, ever since the earlier part of that century, the Rodeney family had been buying land at Dinder and elsewhere. I think we may assume that this same John de Rodeney was the benefactor by whom these alterations were made.

And now we come to an important period, the fourth in the history of the Church at Dinder, which saw the building of the tower, the addition and consecration of its churchyard and its parochial independence. I mentioned that in 1223 William de Flandre granted the advowson of the Church to Bishop Jocelin. In 1268 Bishop William de Bytton made Dinder a prebend and gave up the advowson and fee. In the instrument creating the Prebend we are told that the parishioners of Dinder were lawfully subject to the Mother Church of St. Cuthbert and were buried there. The Prebendary was to be exempt from the Cure of Souls at Dinder, but he was to present to the vicar and his successors a fit chaplain, who was to be supported at the expense entirely of the Prebendary. This position remained till 1493, when we find the office of Prebendary and Vicar of St. Cuthbert's, who had control over the Cure of Souls of Dinder, united in the same person, John Moneyman; and hereafter the Prebend and Cure of Souls at Dinder have continued united down to the present day.

The Rodeneys were still Lords of the Manor of Dinder, and, I think it may not be assuming too much if we say that it was through the benefactions of the Lord of the Manor and his building of the tower, that an arrangement was come to

with the Dean of Wells, under whose jurisdiction Dinder was, and the Vicar of St. Cuthbert's, that Dinder should be raised to an independent position as a Rectory endowed with tithes and glebe and the right of the parishioners to be buried in the churchyard attached to the Church.

In a will of Joan Maiewe of Croscombe, dated 1496, we find a bequest of 6s. 8d. to the fabric of Dinder; possibly the building was still going on, and we may put the tower as having been built about the end of the XV Century. The stone pulpit, which bears the date 1621, a very early example of stone pulpits, points to another alteration which must have taken place at the time of the Reformation, when the ancient "Rood Screen" was swept away and the "Rood" window bricked up. Behind the stone pulpit, when it was removed during the 1871 restoration, were discovered some rough fresco painting and the mutilated remains of a double piscina, but unfortunately no attempt was made to preserve either.

In 1839 the Church was reseated and no record has been kept of the old seats then removed. In 1871 the Church was re-roofed throughout and reseated, the chancel arch rebuilt and slightly raised and widened, the present chancel and chancel aisle built, and the walls faced with ashlar in place of plaster, with which they had been previously covered.

There are five bells, bearing inscriptions :

1. "Sancta—ora nobis."
2. "Sancta Maria Ora + ts 9."
3. "Love God. 1636. I. D."
4. "Repent I Say By not too late, Thyself At Al times
Redy Make. R. A., 1646."
W. Michell, Rector.
A. F. Somerville. }
T. L. James. } Churchwardens.
"Re-cast by Llewellins and James, Bristol, 1902."
5. "Re-cast at Bristol, 1840, W. C. 'Fear God in Life.'"
(The Somerville Motto).

It is hoped that a sixth bell will be added between this and November next.*

The glass in the rood-loft window was collected in 1871 from various windows in the Church. In the right light there is a representation of the First Person of the Holy Trinity—holding Our Lord on the Cross, on His knees. In the left light we see St. Michael weighing the souls.

The Church is dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels.

The modern glass in the chancel is by Clayton and Bell; the east window a memorial to the late Mrs. Somerville; the first and third windows in the south wall memorials to sons of the late Prebendary the Rev. Wm. Michell; and the centre window was filled in memory of the late Miss Somerville. The glass in the west window of the aisle is by Hardman and is a memorial to the Lovell family. Of the west window in the tower I will only say that a former rector was left a legacy by a friend and unfortunately spent it on this token of regard for his memory.

The font has an old base, probably XIV Century, and a later shaft and bowl, XVI Century.

The church plate consists of a Chalice and Paten, both 1731; another Paten, 1725; a Paten or Salver, 1830; and a silver box for bread, 1907.

The Churchwardens' Accounts date back to 1702.

After the President's address, a question was asked as to the position of the rood-loft and some debate followed as to the small window over the pulpit. Mr. Bates did not think this could be the entrance to the rood-loft. Mr. Weaver said there was one like it at Minehead. Mr. Somerville called attention to the old door of the pulpit which was in the vestry.

The President and Mrs. Somerville entertained the com-

* A sixth bell bearing the following inscription, "Amor vincit omnia—H.F.S.—V.G.B., October, 1907," and round the rim, "Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder," was given by Mr. A. F. Somerville to commemorate the marriage of his elder son with Miss V. G. Broadmead on October 9th, 1907.

pany to tea at Dinder House, after which Mr. H. Cary G. Batten, on behalf of the Society, thanked them for their kind hospitality.

The PRESIDENT remarked that it had given Mrs. Somerville and himself great pleasure to receive the members of the Society there, and he hoped they would not allow forty-two years to elapse before they paid them another visit; their last visit to Dinder was in 1865.

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Old Houses, Shepton Mallet.

On the return to Shepton Mallet a party was taken by Dr. F. J. ALLEN to see some of the old buildings, lanes and courts in the older part of the town. It was pointed out that the main street was carried across the bottom of the valley by means of a viaduct and a long embankment, constructed soon after 1815, and therefore fifty years before the same device was adopted at Park Street, Bristol, and at Holborn.

Longbridge House was pointed out as the place where the Duke of Monmouth stayed, when his army was quartered in the town on the way to the invasion of Bristol. It was a Tudor house with XVII Century windows in front, and had formerly contained some good Dutch tiles.

The fine XVII Century house in Lower Lane was noticed. An illustration of this house may be found in an article on "The Old Houses of Shepton Mallet," in the *Architectural Journal* about three years ago.

Evening Meeting.

The Annual Dinner having taken place at the George Hotel, —the President in the chair,—an Evening Meeting was held in the Council Hall for the reading of papers.

The first paper was on "The Papers of the former Corporation of Langport, 1596-1886," by the Rev. D. M. Ross. This is printed *in extenso* in Part II, with two illustrations.

Mr. H. St. GEORGE GRAY gave an account, illustrated by lantern slides, of the excavations conducted at Small Down Camp, near Evercreech, in 1903. Full particulars of this work, with illustrations, are given in the *Proceedings*, Vol. I, pt. ii, pp. 32-49.

The third paper was by Mr. F. BLIGH BOND, F.R.I.B.A., on "Screen-work in the Churches of North-East Somerset," which was illustrated by an excellent series of lantern slides. This paper is printed in full in Part II, with several illustrations.

The evening's programme was concluded with a lantern exhibition of photographic studies of Shepton Mallet Church by Dr. F. J. ALLEN and the Rev. R. L. JONES. Some of these very fine illustrations are reproduced in Dr. Allen's paper on "Shepton Mallet Church" in Part II.

Thanks were returned for these communications, and to the Rector of Shepton Mallet for kindly lending and manipulating the lantern.