

Third Day's Proceedings.

In fine weather the Members left Shepton Mallet at 9.30 a.m., and drove, *viâ* Doulting and West Cranmore, to

Chesterblade.

At Chesterblade Church the party were met by the Rev. W. T. DYNE, who said he did not think the Society had ever visited the place officially before. They had had the advantage of the opinion of Bishop Hobhouse on several points, who thought that the shell of the chapel was Norman. The chancel had been curtailed; it was of most disproportionate size. The s. porch was also out of proportion, too large for the chapel, giving an idea of being the first stage of a s. bell tower, such as existed in Bruton, Wanstrow, Abbas Combe, and several other churches of East Somerset, being both the chief entrance to the church and the belfry. The font was rude enough for pre-Norman times, but it had till about fifty years ago a rope-pattern of Norman design. The windows of the Church were Perpendicular insertions. He called attention to the bell-turret, and the Norman carving on the summer-stones and copings at the w. angles of the nave; on the s. side, the Agnus Dei, representing the Atonement; and on the n., a beast and two heads, which had been supposed to be Daniel, but there was an obvious difficulty about this suggestion, there being two faces to one lion.* The carvings were said to resemble those of the chancel arch of Frindsbury, Strood, Kent, dated about A.D. 1120. Others suggested Jonah. Chesterblade was a chapelry connected with Evercreech from earliest times, it being mentioned in the Taxatio of Pope Nic. A.D. 1291. The churchwardens' accounts showed that the old chancel was pulled down in 1767. The inner s. entrance door-arch was of rather similar pattern to

* One of the members expressed the opinion that this carving represented Adam and Eve and the Evil One (as Lion?).

that at Doultling. The late Mr. R. P. Brereton thought the top of the doorway later.* The figure of the Virgin above was scraped and restored when the Church was re-seated. The stone reading-desk was also scraped at the same time. An old Murray's guide book mentioned its existence. The pulpit was the gift of Mr. Allen at the late restoration. There was an interesting Elizabethan chalice. The registers had always been kept with those of Evercreech. The cross in the churchyard had no steps. There was no mention of it in Pooley, but the base was similar to that at Dinder. Roman coins were found by Mr. Allen on the farm adjoining, ranging over nearly the whole of the Roman occupation. The origin of the name Chesterblade was obscure. Professor Skeat suggested "Chester," camp; "blade," flat surface. In reply to an enquiry as to the second form, Chesterblake, which was literally camp-hill, Mr. Dyne was of opinion that it was an error of a copyist.

Dr. F. J. ALLEN, said that in this Church they saw a plan of a conventional small Norman chapel. They might contrast it if they would with the plan they saw at Shepton Mallet. This nave was comparatively broad and low; while the nave at Shepton Mallet in its original form was considerably narrower and fully twice as high, so that there was a very curious difference in the outline. Shepton Mallet seemed to be originally a Saxon Church; this was undoubtedly Norman. There was not much left in the Church of the Norman work, except the walls. The door was an interesting specimen of Norman work. The depressed arch was exceedingly common in the Norman and Early English doorways in this county. The chancel arch had been taken down and remodelled in the time of the alterations in the XVIII Century. Some of the windows were of the XIV Century, being of the square-headed Decorated type. The w. window was of the Somerset Per-

* In this statement Dr. Allen does not agree. He maintains that the head of the doorway is quite characteristic of the district.

pendicular type, the head being divided into primary compartments, and these divided into secondary ones.

Small Down Camp.

From Chesterblade the party had to make a steep ascent to Small Down Camp, the highest part of which is 728 feet above mean sea level.

Standing on the inner vallum at the eastern entrance of the Camp, Mr. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY gave an interesting account of the excavations which he had conducted there in 1904. After an examination of the eastern end, Mr. Gray conducted the party to the western half of the entrenchment, where he pointed out the remains of eleven barrows or tumuli, in one of which he had found a cremated interment of the Bronze Age. A full description of the excavations (with a plan and several illustrations) is given in the *Proceedings*, Vol. L, pt. ii, pp. 32-49.

A good view of the surrounding country was obtained from the western end, a steep escarpment occurring here and on the n. and s. sides of the Camp. Returning to the carriages at the foot of the hill the members proceeded to

Batcombe Church,

where they were met by the Rector, the Rev. W. C. Baker.

In the churchyard, Dr. F. J. ALLEN dealt with the tower. He said :

Mr. Brereton called this a tower of the Wrington type, a description from which I dissent very decidedly. The Wrington tower is of the North Somerset school, and this of the Mendip school. The only characteristic common to the two towers is the prolongation of the top windows as *long panels* in the stage below ; and this feature was borrowed in both instances from the central tower of Wells Cathedral. Batcombe owes nothing to Wrington ; it is a derivative of the Bruton

and Shepton designs, with the long panels from Wells. The level parapet is in great contrast to the florid crown at Leigh, but it is no less pleasing to the eye. It is completely finished off without pinnacles, but the outline of the tower seems to be designed for finishing with a spire.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER, F.S.A., reminded the party how on the previous day they had disposed of the idea of Henry VII building church towers, and said this was one of those supposed to have been built by him, and the figure on the tower to represent that king. Mr. Bates had pointed out that the figure represented Our Lord either rising from the dead or ascending into heaven or clothed in a purple robe. In the present condition of the figure it was difficult to say what was exactly represented. The tower was built about the time of Henry VI, and it was difficult to tell how this idea of Henry VII got into the heads of Somerset people. About the central figure on the tower there were three sets or pairs of angels. The top pair were clothed in garments like cassocks and the two top angels were holding censers censuring Our Lord. The two underneath were holding emblems of the Passion, one a ladder and the other in one hand three nails and in the other a crown of thorns. The lowest pair were holding scrolls and had feathered legs. He reminded them that Parker in speaking of the nine orders of angels as represented in sculpture described the seraphims as having their limbs feathered and sprinkled over with eyes.

In reply to the Rev. W. C. Baker, Mr. Weaver said that probably our Lord's feet were resting on an orb.

Passing to the interior the Rev. F. W. Weaver gave a description of the building, founded on the excellent paper of the Rev. E. H. Bates in the September number of *Notes and Queries*, 1896. Mr. Bates had made a most careful study of Batcombe Church. He called special attention to the beautiful staircase which led to the rood-loft at the head of which appeared a doorway which led not only to the rood-loft but

also to the roof. The tower was specially noticed for its beautiful fan tracery. The contrast of the E. window, a most severely plain one, with most of those with which they were familiar struck one at once. The font was a good specimen of the Perpendicular period, though it had been scraped a good deal: this appeared to have been done about 1844. On the font there were the arms of the Palton family: there was also a Glastonbury and St. Andrew's cross, and the Tudor rose. There were in the Church interesting monuments to the Bisse family, which was also associated with Croscombe. Dr. Phillip Bisse was Rector of this parish and Archdeacon of Taunton and also sub-Dean of Wells Cathedral. The brass in the chancel recorded that he was rector of that parish from 1564 to 1613. It appeared that he left two thousand books to Wadham College, Oxford, and the foundress Dorothy Wadham was so pleased with the gift that she had his portrait painted and placed over the door of the library of that college. There was a monument in the floor (which had unfortunately become partly obliterated through being walked over a good deal) to John Moore only son of Thomas Moore of Spargrove. According to an early record the Sanzavers held Spargrove of Glastonbury Abbey; then it came to the Bisses, the Moores, and the Cowards. He called attention to the arms of the Moores on several of the tombstones "argent two bars between nine martlets, 3, 3, and 3." This Church contained several stones belonging to Spargrove, collected by Bishop Hobhouse, consisting of remains of the ancient church there. Spargrove was united to Batcombe about 1564 as recorded in the register of Bishop Berkeley.

The Rev. W. C. BAKER expressed the pleasure of the people of Batcombe at seeing the Society there. There was one thing he would like an opinion about and that was the trace of what was apparently an escutcheon in the arch of the tower containing the Sanzaver arms, and which had been partially obliterated. He made a brief statement of what they

proposed to do in improving the Church by the substitution of other windows for those severely plain ones they saw there. They were going to try to raise £2000 to complete the restoration.

The party then left for Evercreech, driving *viâ* Westcombe and Stoney Stratton.

Luncheon at Evercreech.

VOTES OF THANKS.

After the luncheon at the Bell Hotel, Evercreech, the Rev. E. H. BATES said that he as organising secretary had the privilege of returning thanks to those who had helped to make the meetings a success. He proposed, first of all, to begin with the President, Mr. Somerville. With some of their presidents, owing to stress of public duties and other causes, they did not see much of them after the first day. That was their misfortune, but it had been very different that year. Their president had led them and instructed them on several occasions as in the Church at Croscombe. They therefore owed many thanks to Mr. Somerville. Secondly he had to return thanks to the local committee at Shepton Mallet. Only those who had prepared for these meetings beforehand knew how much they owed to the local committees. He thought the committee of Shepton Mallet was one of the best local committees they had ever had to do with. He also wished to return thanks to the clergy who had thrown open their churches and had given them facilities to inspect all that was worth inspecting. He particularly thanked the Rev. R. L. Jones of Shepton Mallet who not only showed them the church but also had shown them those pictures which he had gone in danger of his life to obtain, and who had manipulated the lantern on Tuesday. He also thanked Mr. Darbyshire of Doultling, and Mr. Honnywill who had arranged for such an excellent lunch at Leigh-on-Mendip. They had also had Mr. Allott at Croscombe and

Mr. Baker at Batcombe, and Mr. Dyne who so kindly described Chesterblade Church and who was about to speak to them about Evercreech Church. They would also have much pleasure in listening to Preb. Bennett at Pilton later in the afternoon. Then he would thank Dr. Allen; they owed a great deal to him. They also owed many thanks to the local secretary, Mr. Burnell, who had spent much time in assisting with the preparing the scheme for their programme. He also thanked Mr. Winwood, one of the senior members present, for his lucid explanation of the quarries. He would be sorry to overlook Mr. Bligh Bond who had again given them the benefit of his knowledge of architecture and of the screenwork of their churches. He wished also to mention the great assistance of their assistant-secretary and curator, Mr. Gray. Where he was concerned he did not think anything could go otherwise than well.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER was very pleased to second the vote of thanks moved by his friend and colleague to those who had so kindly assisted to make that meeting a success. Shepton Mallet had received them most cordially, and the meeting of 1907 would be looked back upon with the greatest pleasure.

The vote was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT firstly acknowledged the votes of thanks, and remarked that such loan collections at their Annual Meetings as they had seen at Shepton Mallet had been of great use to the Society and also to those who lived in the district. These meetings induced people to look after things in their own locality which were worth preserving. In proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Bates he felt sure that the Society could not prosper without the valuable assistance of their officers and the able work of Mr. Bates.

Col. CARY BATTEN seconded the vote of thanks. He had known Mr. Bates ever since he was a small boy and by him had been taught a great deal about archaeology.

Mr. C. E. BURNELL, on behalf of the local reception com-

mittee and the Shepton Mallet Natural History Society, heartily thanked the speakers for their kind remarks. He could only say that if the visitors had enjoyed themselves as much at that meeting as the local people had in assisting them they had had an ample reward for the trouble they had taken to entertain the County Society.

The Rev. W. T. Dyne and the Rev. E. H. Bates also responded.

Evercreech Church.

From the churchyard, Dr. F. J. ALLEN described the tower. He said :

This tower is so skilfully designed, and its open situation allows it to be seen to such advantage, that one does not at first realize that it is on quite a small scale. It is evidently the work of the same builders as Batcombe : the top windows, with their long panels, are almost of the same design in the two towers ; but the Evercreech tower being considerably narrower, there are only two windows abreast instead of the three at Batcombe. There is a great resemblance in the composition of Evercreech and Wrington towers : their parts are put together in a similar manner, though their details are quite unlike. In both cases the general idea is taken from the four towers at Wells : here at Evercreech the details are almost entirely of the local character, related to those of the Batcombe, Bruton and Wells Cathedral towers ; while at Wrington the details of Wells Cathedral are mixed with those of North Somerset. I imagine that neither tower was copied from the other, but that the builders compared notes and tried which could make the best of the idea. Most persons who know both towers give the preference to Evercreech.*

Passing to the interior the Rev. W. T. DYNE, quoting from Bishop Hobhouse's notes and other sources, said :-- "This fabric is the great glory of the place. It is a typical Somerset-

* For illustrations of these two towers, see the *Proceedings* for 1899 and 1904.

shire church, raised in the latter half of the XV Century, and possessing all the characteristics of that prolific period. It was at this period that so many of the older and smaller churches of the county were pulled down, to make way for larger and loftier ones. These had grand western towers, a lofty clerestory, supported on light arcades and flanked by two aisles; the windows very large, and intended for rich glazing. They had, moreover, open timber roofs, enriched in the spandrels formed by the tie-beam and couples, and pierced parapet on nave walls and tower (often on aisle walls too), a very rich belfry story with pierced stone-work in the windows, and tower buttresses terminating at various stages in pinnacles. All these features Evercreech possessed in great excellence, but its builder's skill is specially told in his management of the tapering of the tower, and in the enrichment of the top, by surrounding each of the corner pinnacles with a group of smaller pinnacles. There is no record of the skilful designer of this work of art, nor of the benefactors who largely provided the funds. The Rectors, the Prior and Brethren of St. John, may have co-operated, but their own liability they left undischarged, for the chancel of the older and smaller building was left standing, as it stands now in disproportion, showing its age by its size, its ruder masonry, and its XIV Century windows. The aid of the munificent Bishop Bekyngton, 1443-65, who occasionally lived on this manor, is not likely to have been wanting, but had he been a large contributor we should surely read the fact in stone, as in his numerous buildings at Wells, all bearing the Beacon and Tun in allusion to his name."

Mr. Dyne went on to point out that the tower-arch was pronounced a bold composition by Mr. Ferrey. The w. gallery appeared to contain portions of the rood-screen. The w. window was restored in 1843. There were angels with crosses on both sides of the n. aisle piers, said to be for carrying images. The roof was re-painted on the old lines in 1843, and

probably the old colours had been faithfully copied. On one of the shields, second from the chancel, might be seen what appeared to be the badge of the Duke of Somerset, to whom Bishop Barlow sold Evercreech Manor, in 1548. The s. aisle was new, built in 1843. Before this there was an aisle of smaller dimensions, called the Park aisle, after Evercreech Park House—the seat, for a short time, of the Hoptons. It appeared to have existed as a chapel previously, as it contained a piscina. There was also a large s. porch. The piscina in the chancel was only lately discovered at the bottom of a cupboard by Father Ethelbert Horne, of Downside Abbey, and himself : it had been removed at the restoration.

The following entries related to the candelabra in the Church, etc. :—1760 journey to Bristol to agree with Mr. Wansborough to make the candelstick Charles Penney. Paid Mr. Wansborough, of Bristol, for a new candlestick, £12 12s. ; for lacquering the old candlestick, £3 3s. ; new nossels and part of the body, and mending the old branches, 14/-. Pair Communion candlesticks, £1 1s. ; turning new body for to make the candlesticks, 1763. Paid James Dyke for tuning the 5th bell and other jobs, £2 2s. 1781, paid John Gullick for moving and setting up the Cross, £1 10s. John Rodbard and John Coles, churchwardens.

He stated that there were eight bells, two being added in 1907. One bell, the 7th, was pre-Reformation, and bore the inscription : “Unus Deus Sancta Trinitas.” Two others were by Bilbie, 1746 ; two by Jefferies and Price, 1853 ; one by Cockey, 1718, recast, 1907. These had no inscriptions save the names of the makers and vicars and churchwardens of the period.

There were few monuments in the Church of any interest except one to Dugdale. The list of vicars began with Roger of Bath, in 1244. James Dugdale was vicar from 1619-1661. He endured much for the King's cause, and when a troop of horse came to arrest him the women of Evercreech beat them off with stones. The registers began in 1540.

Pilton Church.

Pilton was the last place visited, and here Mr. Bates, in the absence from England of the Rev. Chancellor Holmes, gave a description of the Church, which varied considerably from the others seen.

The Rev. E. H. BATES, said there was a good account of the Church in the volume of *Proceedings*, Vol. XXXIV (Wells, 1888). The "Restoration committee" of some forty or fifty years ago, might well have been called the "Destruction committee," so little of interest did they leave. This place, like West Pennard, being in the possession of Glastonbury, had been Christian from the earliest time, yet it was curious that there was no trace here or hardly elsewhere in Somerset of a church which contained Saxon work. The pre-Norman churches, of which there must have been a considerable number in the county, had disappeared entirely. Pilton was formerly the centre of an enormous parish, which included Croscombe, Shepton Mallet, and several other parishes in that district. He called attention to the resemblance of the pillars in the aisle to certain work they saw in Shepton Mallet Church. The exceptional feature of the Church having been heightened without being enlarged, was noted specially. The existence of the great wall between the nave and chancel, and the chancel arch being so much lower than the roof on each side, was another curious feature.

While the fabric of the building, more by chance than anything else, still preserved some interesting details, the ancient fittings were to be found in a very fragmentary condition. A small piece of ancient glass contained a representation of Precentor Overay kneeling at a fald-stool. The plate included a medieval paten given by John Dier, vicar (*Proc.*, XLIII, ii, 207). There were two pieces of embroidery, one still retaining the name of the donor Richard Pomeroy. The church chest contained a number of books, including a Vulgate printed at

Nuremberg in 1487. A book of churchwardens' accounts for the period 1508-1530 was printed, with a valuable introduction by Bishop Hobhouse in Vol. IV of the *Somerset Record Society*. It contained much of interest when "this house was in her first glory."

Mr. F. BLIGH BOND called attention to the screen (elsewhere described in full, pt. ii, pp. 94-7). He alluded to Professor Freeman's opinion about the length of the nave, which he conceived to have been originally shorter and lengthened by the addition of the chancel; there was no positive evidence of this, but it appeared a very reasonable view on account of the disproportionate length of the nave.

The party then proceeded to the church-house, where, whilst they were at tea, the Vicar, the Rev. Preb. C. W. Bennett, explained that the building in which they were seated was originally a guest-house of the monks, who had a house at the foot of the hill, the interior of which remained in much the same style as it had been when it ceased to be a monastic building. The guest-house was converted into cottages, but falling into a ruinous state, it was restored on the same lines as the original building, and the old material used as far as possible. The residence of one of the churchwardens was also connected with the monastery.

The few minutes that remained enabled some of the party to visit the old barn, which though commonly called a tithe barn, was in reality used for storing the crops grown on the estate of the monks at Pilton, which produce, including that from the vine-yards of the village, was water-borne to Glastonbury.

A short drive brought the party that remained back to Shepton Mallet, most of the members leaving for their homes that evening, after having spent a profitable and pleasant time during the meeting and excursions, the latter however on the first two days being somewhat marred by heavy storms of rain.