

LONG MELFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD.

On Monday, the 11th of June, an excursion was carried out, as arranged by Mr. Claude Morley, in the neighbourhood between Boxford and Long Melford. The excursionists met at Polstead Church about 10.30, when both the Excursion Director and also the rector, The Rev. E. R. Buckley, explained to the company features of that most interesting building. These periods of architecture were pointed out, namely the fine Norman doorway on the western side, the aisles of the Decorated period, and then the later additions, of Perpendicular work, largely of Tudor brick. It was said that the fine arcades of the nave were of an early date in Norman architecture, but that the clerestory pointed to later Norman influence. The Rector exhibited in the Vestry the original paper registers, dating from 1538, and showed also the mazer bowl made from the root of the Gospel oak, presented to the church by the late Prince Frederick Duleep Singh in 1924. Of course the Gospel oak was not forgotten, nor the grave of poor Maria Marten, or rather what has been left of it by curio hunters with a morbid taste.

The next halt was at Boxford, which was reached about 11.30, where the visitors were welcomed by the Rev. W. S. Andrews, the rector, who delivered in the church an address, descriptive of both Boxford and the sacred edifice. The place must indeed have much declined, for we were told that in 1524, 60 of its inhabitants were engaged in weaving, in comparison with Lavenham, which had 57, with Melford 28, and Sudbury 27, and apparently still increased, till towards the end of the 17th century one manufacturer alone gave work to 200 people employed in the cloth industry. One of the most beautiful objects connected with the Church is the North porch, which is of timber; it is probable that this was removed from the south side when the present one on that site was erected, about the middle of the 15th century. An interesting item in the history of the church was that in the year 1515 money was bequeathed "for guilding of the rood loft," and then the church accounts in 1568 shew that a certain sum was voted for the cost of taking it down. The South aisle has some mural painting said "to represent King Edward the Confessor crowned, under a canopy, beside two tabernacled niches." After an inspection of both the interior and exterior of Boxford church, the excursion proceeded to Chilton Hall.

At Chilton Hall, by the extreme kindness of Sir Crisp and Lady English, the visitors were allowed to enjoy their lunch, amid the beautiful garden that had been made in front of the portion of the old Hall which remains, which lunch was augmented by a plentiful supply of fresh strawberries, with wine and other suitable

drinks, supplemented by choice cigars and cigarettes, so that the party felt refreshed to enjoy and appreciate more fully the visit to the interior of the house which was still undergoing restoration, even when we were there. Sir Crisp English had prepared a paper to read to the visitors, but on account of his enforced absence in town this was read by Mr. Claude Morley. He said "that the wide moat probably dates from Saxon times. The walled-in garden was at one time used as a barracks. A hundred soldiers left it for the Crusades. Evidences of a falconry remain here. The present house of Tudor brick was erected about 1550 by Robert Crane. Lately it has been restored and many beams have been exposed. Work in the turret, where the windows were bricked up is still in progress. The fine open fireplace in what is now the lounge, was found to have been altered on twelve different occasions."

Some of the party ventured, amid the violent thunderstorms which occurred soon after lunch, to visit Chilton Church, reached from the Hall by a narrow and very moist lane, but they were rewarded by being able to inspect the three fine tombs of the Crane family. These are described by the writers of that very interesting article, published in the "East Anglian Daily Times" of the following day, "The best, a marble altar tomb with panelling and shields, and the indent of a marginal inscription, has recumbent effigies of a knight and his lady. She wears a collar of SS. The period is about 1490—1500. A slightly earlier tomb supports the alabaster effigy of a youth. In the West wall of the organ chamber, which is incidentally the Crane chapel, is the monument of Sir Robert Crane, and his two wives, dated 1624. A window has been blocked to accommodate it. This church was viewed through the courtesy of the Rev. John Milner, and there is little else in it worthy of note."

At 2.30 the departure was made for Acton Church. Here Mr. Claude Morley detailed the features of interest in the fabric, while the Rev. Tyrrell Green described the brasses, one of which, that to Sir Robert de Bures, is noted for being the finest military figure executed in brass in the county of Suffolk. The marginal inscription is lost, but the date is about 1302. He is represented cross-legged, in complete chain mail except for his kneepieces, which were probably made of "boiled leather" termed "cuir-bouilli." The effigy of Dame Alice Bryan, in a widow's costume dated about 1435, was also seen. This is interesting because her book of household and personal expenses has lately been discovered, and is soon to be published by the Society, under the editorship of Mr. V. B. Redstone, F.S.A. Great interest was also shown in the monument which is in the chapel at the East end of

the South aisle, with the recumbent effigy of a man, and a lady seated, in memory of Robert Jennens of Acton Place, who died in 1725-6, and also William Jennens, who died in 1798 in his 98th year. The interest felt was on account of the great lawsuit which took place concerning their property, which lawsuit is supposed to have been used by Charles Dickens in his "Bleak House" in representing the case of "Jarndyce versus Jarndyce."

From Acton a departure was made about 3.30 for Long Melford Hall, where the visitors received a hearty welcome from both Sir William and Lady Hyde-Parker, who threw open their interesting home, which was explored under the guidance of both host and hostess. The estate, once the property of, and at times also the residence of, the Abbots of St. Edmunds, became after the repression of the Monasteries in 1545, the property of Sir William Cordell, Kt., Speaker of the House of Commons in the time of Queen Mary, and Master of the Rolls in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and he erected the present house. His portrait and that of his wife were seen in what is called "the Cordell Room." Many other interesting portraits hang on the walls of this house, including Cordells, Firebraces and many Parkers. Sir William described to the company the fire dogs in the great hall. He said, "these have bases bearing date 1559, but the uprights with representations of Samson (probably in allusion to Abbot Sampson)" the Fall, and the Redemption, are considered to be much older. In the Library there was seen a series of pictures representing naval battles connected with naval commanders in the Parker family. Upstairs was seen Queen Elizabeth's bed. The pomegranate is largely used in the carving about it, which latter must have been in memory of Katherine of Aragon, it being her emblem or badge.

A brief meeting was held in the great hall, with Sir John Wood, Bart., our President in the chair. Several new members were elected, and a certain amount of other business transacted. Tea was then served, part of the gathering remaining at the Hall, as the guests of Sir William and Lady Hyde-Parker, while others were accommodated at the Bull Inn and elsewhere.

After tea, a visit was made to Kentwell Hall, the other fine Elizabethan mansion in Long Melford parish, the old home of the Clopton family. Unfortunately, the tenants who had been there some while had just left, and the new tenant, Sir Connor Guthrie, had only arrived a few days previously, or he would gladly have welcomed the Society and granted permission to view the interior of the house. Anyhow, everyone was able to wander around its walls and alongside its brick-sided moat, and appreciate its beauty, surrounded as it is on the one side by an old-world garden, and

elsewhere by the fine timber of the park, and furthermore, entirely enclosed by the waters of the moat, in the which, with the setting sun, it was reflected here and there.

Afterwards the party met again in Long Melford Church, where a short paper was read by the rector, the Rev. H. R. S. Bree. He said, "there had been a church here since the 11th century, and that the present fabric is the third of its kind. Begun in 1450 as a thank-offering and a memorial to posterity, as well as a tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament, Long Melford Church was reared by the joint efforts of the monks of Bury and well-disposed men of the place, among whom was John Clopton who was buried in the Easter tomb, the place of honour. Finished in 1497, less than 50 years saw the church's spoliation. In 1543 images, ornaments and churchyard cross were swept away. The Parliamentary despoilers in 1643 smashed 7,000 pictures of stained glass. In 1828 the church was in sorry state, the nave roof broken, windows bricked up, the West end marred by a gallery. Restoration began in 1866 and in 1900 the tower was refaced."

"This church is still one of the most interesting in Suffolk, and will doubtless always remain so, on account of the multitude of interesting objects it contains. It was recorded that "the Nave is 152 feet in length, and is flanked by wide aisles. Arcades of nine bays divide the church into almost equal portions, and there is one continuous roof over nave and chancel. The Lady Chapel still exists east of the main structure and was used as a school in 1670, for a multiplication table is still to be seen on one of its walls."

Soon after 6 p.m. the visitors had all taken their departure from Long Melford and its exceptionally interesting buildings of ancient days—having thoroughly enjoyed an excursion excellently planned and well carried out.

EXCURSION IN SOUTH ELMHAM DISTRICT.

The third excursion of the Society took place on Friday, August 3rd, and the particular district visited may be termed "that of the Elmhams," a district particularly noted for the Norman doorways to its Churches, and many of these were seen during the day, all of which have been beautifully and truthfully illustrated in a fine book dealing with such objects of antiquity by Mr. Charles Keyser, F.S.A.

The party met outside the church of Elmham St. Peter at 11 o'clock. This is a building very typical of many others in