

BACTON CHURCH.

[Read June, 1874.]

This Church ranks high for the beauty of its architecture not only among the Churches of Hartismere Deanery, but, probably, also of those of the whole County. Perhaps it will be as well to say a little first as to an earlier Church in this parish. I had always been of opinion that a Church existed at Bacton at the time of the Domesday survey in the year 1086. I find that I was right, for my (photo-zincographed) copy of Domesday-book of the part relating to Suffolk, and similarly also the edition of 1816, by Sir Henry Ellis, in the Public Record Office, lately inspected by me, confirm my opinion by the following facts. That there was a Church here before the Norman Conquest, with 24 acres of glebe (now 52 acres), of the value of 3s. (per acre, I suppose); that the patron of the benefice in T. R. E. was Leuninus, who also held in demesne the manor of Bacton, and other property, under Earl Harold, who was an owner, to some extent, in Stowmarket, and other parts of Suffolk; and, as is well known, fell, when King, at the battle of Hastings. This Church may have been a large Church, built of stone, which had succeeded an older Church of timber; but I am doubtful about this, as, according to Hollingsworth's *History of Stowmarket*, there were only six Churches of stone in the whole Deanery, consisting of thirty-four Churches, or parts of Churches, one of which was in an adjoining parish of Wyverstone, the five others being at Mellis, Stoke Ash, Rishangles, Thorndon, and Redgrave. Probably this Church of the Conqueror's time was succeeded

by the present building, judging by the style of the architecture (the Decorated, with later additions in the succeeding style, or Perpendicular). I suppose the date of it to belong to about the commencement of the reign of Edward III., or A.D. 1332, in regard to the Decorated work, and with regard to the later Perpendicular work to from A.D. 1410 to 1450.

But by whom the Church was built I have not been able to discover. The chancel work belongs to the dates I have named. It was restored in 1860, at a cost of £500. In making an opening in the wall for the new vestry, some fragments of what the builder supposed to have been an ancient vestry were discovered between the two north-western windows, but it appeared to me to be a doubtful case. The south door, which had been used as a public entrance for the congregation, was then blocked up, in order to avoid the draught, and the uselessness of so many doors. The sedile, and the credence forming the sill of the north window, were discovered and restored. On one of the steps was a stone laid crosswise, which had lost its brasses, of the shape of which I have a drawing. It appeared to me to be a priest's stone, having the outline of a chalice upon it; but being much worn away, and very tender, it could not be exposed to the wear on the floor of the Church, and was laid in the tower. Below it was another stone without its brass, of the shape of the original, of which I have also a drawing. Also, at the head of this, another small stone, the inscription being worn out. The three stones Mr. Butterfield, the architect, suffered to be removed, and I felt disposed to have them relaid elsewhere. I thought I should be safe in following the directions of so eminent an architect.

The nave and tower are in the same style as the chancel, the Decorated period being represented chiefly in the east windows of the aisles, the clerestory, with two windows between each bay, being of the Perpendicular or later period. Externally it is richly ornamented in devices in flint work, like many other Churches in the county, representing the chessboard, foliage, flowers, St. Catherine's wheel, and the monograms of the Saviour, and of St. Mary the Virgin, to

whom the Church is dedicated, some crowned and some plain, the crossed sword, the triple crown, the mitre, the letter T; three fishes, and other simpler devices, to the number of about thirty, two appearing between each clerestory window on both sides of the Church, and being, as is well known, religious symbols. Also nine triangles on each wall, the emblem of the Holy Trinity.

The nave and roof were restored in 1864, at a cost of about £1600. Two of the old backs of benches were preserved. These are beautifully carved, and will be seen at the west end. Date, I suppose, same as Church. The other two were in a very dilapidated state. All the other benches were plain, and, according to a date painted on them, belonged to a later period, *i.e.*, about 1650, but this is doubtful. The west outer doorway of the tower was reopened in 1864, having previously (in 1841) been blocked up with the object of strengthening the tower. The inner door-way is modern, and took the place of a small window, which was there previous to 1841, and was similar to that now existing in the turret staircase, although somewhat larger. I see no traces of there having been a belfry arch, which is to be traced in most Churches, and I shall be glad to know what the members of our Society think on this point.

The turret staircase (with a small light in stone tracery, quatrefoil, in each stage) of red brick, with stone quoins and dressings, with a well designed conical stone capping and finial, having its entrance from within the nave, and not from the outside, as in modern cases, leads to the belfry landing, where there was an opening into the nave (now blocked up). What was the object of this doorway or window? Not surely (as is supposed) that the ringers might see when the congregation were assembling, for they rang from the floor below. There are five bells. The inscriptions are, on the treble, "Peck & Chapman, of London, *Fecerunt* 1772; 2nd has Mears' name, and names of Rector and Churchwardens, 1841; 3rd, the only old one, "*Sancta Maria O pro nobis*"; 4th, "Charles Newman made me,

1629"; tenor, same as on the second. They were taken down, with the framework, when the steeple was repaired in 1841, but having been replaced at that time in a lower position (*i.e.*, below the window) than formerly, their sound has since been much deadened by the surrounding walls, to the regret of myself and my parishioners. I now come to the chief feature in the nave, the magnificent open timber roof, similar to that at St. Andrew's, Cotton; St. Mary's, Woolpit; St. Mary's, Bury St. Edmund's, and others, with its double hammer beam principals between each clerestory window, and its rich cornices between the principals. The canopies and the figures of angels, which existed formerly, as at Woolpit, I believe, to the present day, were probably destroyed by, or under the authority of, Mr. Commissioner Dowsing, and his Church spoilers, who also defaced the font about the year 1643. In the spandriils of the roof are some very good lines of carving. On the north side the carving is curious and grotesque. Among other representations you will see those of a fox or dog running away with a shoulder of mutton, two dragons facing each other, heads, animals, &c. The eastern bay, which we found to be coloured, was repainted in 1864, under the directions of Mr. Butterfield, as nearly as possible after the original pattern. The fact of only one bay being coloured is attributable either to its being the chief bay near the chancel, or over the rood, or as a pattern or beginning, the other bays to be finished at some future time, or when more money might be available for the purpose. The same thing occurs at St. Mary's, Bury St. Edmund's, and the same rule may, perhaps, be applied to the carved seats (four in number only), of which I have already spoken. The plain benches, which remained (marked with the date of 1650), appear to have been intended to be carved, and were ready roughed to a pattern which can be seen in a finished state in Rougham Church, and other Churches near it. The carved backs seem to have formed the commencement of what were intended to be a whole set of carved benches. The carved figures of the lion and dog had been partly knocked off, and now appear



as restored. On the other side (north) were the one, a monk, praying at a fald stool, hooded and tonsured; the other, figure of a griffin. They are still in the carver's hands for renewal, and ought to have been completed years ago.* Over the north door of the nave (blocked up in 1864) was, I am told, the figure of St. Christopher, bearing the Saviour in its most usual position. A figure is still visible on the north-east upper corner of the nave, and another to its left within the window, and part of the original chief painting still remains over the chancel arch, representing, as I suppose, "The Last Judgment," and "The Resurrection of the Dead." The figure of St. Peter with the keys appears in this fresco, as usual. I have never happened to see any description of it as it originally existed, but believe it was noticed by the Camden Society, of which I was a member, some years since. The figure of the Saviour sitting in judgment was probably to be seen formerly in the centre, but the whole painting was found to be so imperfect or obliterated in 1864, through, perhaps, the carelessness of workmen some years before, while scraping off the whitewash, that we could not leave it in a better state of preservation than that in which we now see it.† On the north wall, in the middle, formerly was written the Lord's Prayer; and, on the south wall, opposite, the Apostles' Creed. Scarcely any painted glass remains. The east window in the south aisle, two windows nearest the east end of the north aisle, and the east window itself, had remains of stained glass, representing respectively (though much broken and mutilated), 1st, the emblem of the Crucifixion; 2nd, two large figures and six smaller ones; 3rd, six figures without heads, also the three mitres for the arms of the See, and three crowns for St. Edmund. On reglazing the windows in 1864, I collected the fragments from the glazier, who had taken them away, containing portions

* These have been, since I wrote this paper, returned to me, beautifully restored, under the direction of Mr. Thomas Elliston, of Sudbury, whose services in all Church work are valuable.

† The frescoes have since been copied for illustration of this paper, and are now sent with it.

of figures, diamonds in plain colour, arms, &c., but have not been able to fit them together. Probably they form a puzzle which will prove too much for any of us, and they are exhibited to-day on that table; also, a Bible of 1611, the oldest Church register, commencing A.D. 1558, and the burse, or case for the corporal, made with needlework on canvass in various colors on one side, on the other with patterns in yellow or gold and blue on silk, and at all four corners with silken tassels in different colors studded with beads of pearl. During the incumbency of my predecessor this case was used by the churchwardens to keep the chalice in. The Church plate, dated 1730, the gift of Mrs. Jane Pretyman, and other articles of interest in connection with our parish, are exhibited on the vestry table, on the opposite side.

A portion of the lower part of the old rood screen, without gilding or decoration, and without the doors, remained in 1860, and was not considered worthy of preservation. The staircase leading to the rood loft on the south side is in good condition. The screen work now to be seen against the western wall formed, before 1864, the enclosure for two large square pews at the eastern end of the north and south aisles, in the latter of which formerly (if not in the former also) there existed a chapel, the piscina in south-west window having been re-opened in 1864. The south aisle probably belonged to the ancient family of Pretyman, who were large proprietors in this and neighbouring parishes from the earlier part of the 16th century, if not earlier still, up to the present day, being also formerly patrons of the advowsons of Bacton and Côtton, some also being Rectors of these parishes, Rev. Thomas Pretyman's name appearing in the institution books as Rector of Bacton in 1531. The grave-stones re-laid in the aisles belong to the same family, bearing inscriptions dating from the middle of the 16th to the commencement of the 18th century, and the family arms, and those of Baron, Pistor, Smith, Tyrell, and other families into which they intermarried. A small brass remains in the nave, with inscription and date 1593.

In digging for a new foundation for the south-easternmost

pier, the old foundation was found to have been cut away to the shape of the inside of the old stone coffins for burial purposes. Some remains were in them, which at once fell to dust; where a head had lain was seen the remains of parchment, and part of a lead seal, on which were engraven the letters R.A.S.P.P., and the figure 6 in Roman characters. A fac-simile of the seal is sent with this paper. It seemed to have a slip of parchment run through it, as in the case of some documents in the British Museum. The font has carved figures of angels, bearing shields and roses, symbols of the Virgin Mary, alternately, except on one side of the octagon, which was left blank, and placed against a pillar.

I now come to the exterior of the building, having as yet only alluded to the flint work devices on the clerestory walls. In the Churchyard, near the old north door, is a ridged coffin stone, having a raised cross. I conjecture the date of it to be the 14th century. On the opposite side, near the porch, is a coffin-shaped stone, without inscription. On the south wall may be read as follows, but in abbreviated Latin:—“*Orate pro animabus domini Jacobi Hobart et Margaretæ uxoris ejus et parentum eorum.*” Thomas Hobart, of Layham, and Peter Naunton, of Letheringham, both in Suffolk, were the parents. Sir James Hobart was Attorney General in the reign of Henry VII., held property in this parish, which I have as yet been unable to identify; built the fine Church at Loddon, Norfolk; also St. Olave’s Bridge over the Waveney, that divides Norfolk and Suffolk; was a great benefactor to the noble roof of the Cathedral of Norwich, and was, in a word, a man of great charity and wide-spread generosity. He was buried in the year 1522 (having died at a very advanced age) in the Cathedral, between the ninth and tenth north pillars; and also his third wife, Margaret or Margery, who died in 1517. I do not find that he lived in Bacton, although our old parish records show that he was frequently named as one of the trustees of our charities. These records date from the beginning of the 15th century, and are in good preservation,

as some years since I examined them, and transcribed the greater part of them. Amongst the numerous benefactors to our parish, whose gifts are known to me through ancient documents, I cannot find the name of Sir James Hobart. Might it not be reasonable to conjecture that he and his father before him, built the south aisle of our Church? On the north wall, near the north door, I find also in abridged Latin:—"Orate pro animabus Roberti Goche et Agnetis uxoris ejus." This Robert Goche was a capellanus, or chaplain, and one of the churchwardens of the parish in the beginning of the 16th century, who paid the second instalment of the 23 marks, viz., $4\frac{1}{2}$ marks January 1st, 1513, for the sixteen acres of land at Finningham, to the use of Bacton parish. Robert Goche and his wife gave various gifts for the conduct of Divine service in the Church, and to the guild, as I learn from old inventories. Other benefactors were the Pretymans, Raynbirds, Deyneses, Ferrowe and Soper (Rectors of the parish); Kevetts, Symondses, Cooks, Cakes, Talbots, and many more. Robert Goche also, as I learnt from a deed (chantry certificate of the 2nd Edward VI. in the Record Office) by his will gave the money to be received for his lands sold to find a priest to sing mass in this Church, and pray for his soul, and for a light in the said Church. A priest was found, and had £5 6s. 8d. for his salary or wages, and for the light two shillings. The funds of this charity were probably devoted, together with those of many others, to the foundation of Grammar Schools, such as that at Bury St. Edmund's, which still exists, and are popularly known as King Edward's Schools. On the nave roof eastward there is the cot of stone which contained the sancte bell for ringing notice of the *sanctus*, or other solemn parts of Divine service. My kind friend, Colonel Tomline, who was a liberal subscriber to our Church Restoration Fund, told me, not long since, that it was singular that instead of a cross his family arms were to be seen at the east end of the chancel. These, however, I have not been able to discover. The cross is new, for the old one was very dilapidated. The arms in the window, "three

mitres for the arms of the See, impaling or, on a chevron, between three leopard's heads cabossed, gu.," are those of Nix, Bishop of Norwich, 1500-1536, who possessed the manor and advowson, together with the palace and park in this parish, all of which the Bishops of Norwich had possessed for centuries. Bishop Nix, having incurred a *præmunire*, forfeited these possessions to Henry VIII., and was forced to exchange the large revenues of his See for the revenues of the Abbey of St. Bennet. Where the palace was I have not been able to learn. The other arms, "Gu, on a fesse erm., a lion passant or., in chief a cross flory arg., between two annulets or, in base an annulet of the last," are those of Nix's suffragan, John Underwood, titular Bishop of Chalcedon, who was Rector of this parish in 1519. I have traced out the continuous list of the Lords of the manor and patrons of the Church from the Conquest to the present time, and the list of Rectors from the 14th century, the advowson having been in my own family since 1741, to this date, Kirby, in his *Suffolk Traveller*, supposes that the manor was granted to the Duke of Norfolk by Henry VIII. I found a record in London proving that Queen Elizabeth in 1562 granted it to the Duke on payment of £2,654 5s. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., including the manor of Cotton Bresworth, and the advowsons of Bacton, Cotton, and Shipmeadow. All the property having belonged to Anne of Cleves under Henry the VIII.'s will, she presented to Bacton Church in 1554.

LIST OF RECTORS OF BACTON.

14 Kal. Oct., 1318.	FIRMINUS DE LAVENHAM. Ad Coll. Epi. Nor.
4 Oct., 1341.	JOHN DE SUTTON, Tho. de Norwico. Ad Coll. Epi.
4 Non., Dec.	JOHN DE GYSELINGHAM. Per mut cum Badingham. Ad Coll. Epi.
13 Sept., 1349.	JOHN STANLAK. Ad Coll. Epi.
10 Feb., 1383.	JOH. MASELYN. Per mut cum Fornham. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
Ult ^e Aug., 1383.	GULFR BARKER. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
7 Feb., 1391.	RIC. BUSK. Ad Coll. Epi.

- 29 Oct., 1400. ROB. BRYAN. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 28 Nov., 1418. JOHN FERROUR. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 JOHN SPARROW. R. 14—
 3 Martii, 1497. EDM. BRYGGETT. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 21 Jun., 1505. WILL. SOPER. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 19 Maii., 1519. JOH. EPS. CALCEDON. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic.
 Gen.
 18 Maii., 1527. RIC. REDMAYN. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 20 Sept., 1528. WILL. NEWTON. Ad Coll. Dui. Vic. Gen.
 6 Maii, 1531. THO. PRETTYMAN. Ad Coll. Epi.
 12 Feb., 1538. ERVANUS LEGH. Ad p. Rob. Stoor et Ric.
 Adam. Mōne advoc. conc. p. Ep. Nor.
 10 Jul., 1554. JOHN SHARP. Ad p. Henrici Gray Gen. Mōne
 adv. conc. p. Duām Annam de Cleves.
 Penult Martii., 1564. ANDR. DUNCH ; THOS. NUTTALL. Ad p.
 John Tyrrell Mil.
 1593. ROG. NUTTALL. Ad p. Assign Johs. Pretty-
 man.
 17 Apr., 1601. THO. MUNCK. Ad p. Ric. Hern.
 Ult. Dec., 1617. EDV. BRADSHAW. Ad p. Ric. Hern.
 11 Feb., 1633. JOH. MARLETON. Ad p. Joh. Becon.
 9 Sept., 1663. JOH. STINNETT. Ad p. Thomæ Syer.
 25 Sept., 1695. GUL. STINNETT. Ad p. Joīs. Needham, Joh.
 Symonds, and Joh. Rampley.
 1702, 23 Feb. FR. COCKSEGE. Ad p. Elizth Stinnett, Vid.
 1722, 24 die Mensis CAROLUS PLEIS institutus fuit post mortem
 Apr. Francis Cocksedgē. Elizth Cocksedgē pleno Jure
 patrona. Et eodem die dicta Rectoria de Bac-
 ton unita fuit cum — de Gislingham. Pro-
 viso curatum habeat, &c.
 1743, June 27. JAMES BARKER. Sarah Barker, widow, of full
 right by death of C. Pleice.
 1770, 9th July. ED. BARKER. John Barker, Esquire, of Shrop-
 ham, p.
 1795, Nov. 6. WILLIAM BOND, by William Mason.
 1802, January 5th. EDWARD BURTON BARKER, on resignation
 of Wm. Bond, by William Mason.
 1858, Sept. 3rd. AUGUSTUS BARKER HEMSWORTH, on his
 own petition.

A. B. HEMSWORTH.