

COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF DENSTON.

BY THE

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Denston, or as it was anciently written, Denardeston, and Denerdestuna in Domesday, is situate within the franchise or liberty of S. Edmund, in the hundred of Risbridge, the Deanery of Clare, and Archdeaconry of Sudbury. The Church is a fine example of the Perpendicular style, and is one of the 18 churches in Suffolk dedicated to Saint Nicholas. It was, probably, erected towards the end of the reign of Henry VI., or at the beginning of the reign of Edward IV., say about A.D. 1470. The fabric is similar in design to that of Melford, from which it is only eight miles distant. It consists of a nave and aisles, seven bays long, with a south porch, and tower at the west end. The building is lofty, having transomed windows, that is to say with horizontal mullions, and a fine clerestory, rising above the arcades of the nave. The roof deserves special attention, large figures of animals, comprising lions, crocodiles, stags, dogs, and hares, all courant, formerly covered the wall-plates; nine now exist in the nave, only seven in the north aisle, and but three on the south side. The ancient wood-work has been well preserved; the screens, and choir stalls in the chancel, as well as the seats in the nave, have suffered but little during the Reformation period. The肘ed stalls have *Miserere** seats, which lift up and fold back. Such seats were common in collegiate churches, being designed so as to afford very considerable rest to

* French, *Misericorde*, mercy.

those who used them. They were allowed in the Roman Catholic church as a relief to the infirm, during the long services that were required to be performed by the ecclesiastics in a standing posture. The old oak pewing* in the nave remains in its original position. This fact serves to prove that many of our churches were fitted with fixed seats for a long time before the Reformation. Such appears to have been the case here, the termination of the ends of these open seats, being carved with poppy-heads, † of lions, rabbits, and other devices. The entrance to the old rood loft is clearly seen in the north wall, whilst the embattled rood or candle-beam remains *in situ* over the lower portion of the chancel screen which extends across the nave and aisles. The fine east window, of five transomed lights, is filled with ancient painted glass, which has been collected from other parts of the church, and arranged as at present within the recollection of persons still living. Under the eastern arch, on the north side of the chancel, will be seen a curious altar tomb of open work, enclosing the effigies of a man and woman in their shrouds, but to whose memory it was erected is not known.

There are some brasses; one on the chancel floor to a man in armour with his wife by his side. This for Henry Everard, Esq., who died in 1524, and Margarete, daughter of Sir Robert Broughton, in heraldic dresses. The figures, with their coats-of-arms, are engraved in Cotman's work of Suffolk brasses, and this circumstance led to some comments in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which are interesting to archæologists, it is remarked that a helmet, under the head of sepulchral effigies, seems to have belonged to knighthood, and no inferior rank. All persons who in their lifetime were accustomed to follow the profession of arms, were entitled to have the head of their sepulchral effigy placed on a helmet. Cotman

* Pew or pue, derived from the Latin podium, originally meant anything on which we lean; and retained in the French s'appuyer, to support one's self.

† Pupa-heads from French, *poupee*—a doll.

gives at least three effigies where the figure rests its head on a helmet, and the parties represented had obtained no higher ranks superior to that of esquire, as for example Henry Everard, Esq., in Denston church (*Gent. Mag.*, 1826, i., 584). There is another brass, that of a female figure with a shield over it for one of the family of Drury, one Felice, who died 1480.

The font is perpendicular, with light carved panels representing the crucifixion, resurrection, &c. Lovers of architecture cannot fail to notice the well proportioned porch with its fine ceiling of fan tracery, whilst ecclesiologists will take note of the Benatura* or Holy Water-Stoup against the south-east buttress. The position is somewhat unusual, as they are generally found within the porch, and inserted in the south wall of the church. It will be observed, likewise, that the buttresses of the aisles are terminated with battlemented caps, which give them a neat and finished appearance.

The church plate deserves attention: upon the foot of the chalice, which is unusually small (5 inches high by $2\frac{1}{2}$ across the bowl) is engraved "Denardston:" the paten (likewise of silver, but very thin,) is embossed with pattern work, and has at opposite sides two handles, which resemble small scallop shells. It measures 5 inches in diameter. Though of plainer design, it is similar in form to the paten, or alms-dish, belonging to Bredgar church, Kent (*Archæologia Cantiana*, xvi., 348).

The tower contains only two bells. Finding such a magnificent church in a retired spot like this, one is naturally led to enquire further into its history. This informs us that this magnificent church was erected in connection with a College of Secular Canons, consisting of a warden and a certain number of priests. It was endowed with the Collegiate Church of Denston, and with a manor called Beamonds, and lands in Monks Eleigh, Groton, and Little Bradley. It is said to have been founded by one John Denston, on the day of whose

* French *benitier*.

anniversary 40s. were customarily given to the poor, but about 1474 Sir John Howard, Knt., and John Broughton, jun., are styled founders. According to the King's Books, made in 1534 by the order of Henry VIII., with a view to obtaining a correct return of ecclesiastical revenues, the clear annual value was £22 8s. 7d. Upon the dissolution of monasteries in 1548, Sir Thomas Smith, Knt., and John Smith, appear to have obtained a grant of the same, and it has since passed with the lordship. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it came into the possession of William Burd, who died in 1591. It was purchased of a William Burd, Esq., by Mr. Robinson, who died in 1609. Thence it descended to Lieut.-General Robinson, a distinguished soldier, who married Rebecca, eldest daughter of Robert, Lord Clive. This gallant officer raised and commanded a corps of fencibles, and was for many years one of the members in Parliament for Bishop's Castle, in the county of Salop; that borough having returned two members until disfranchised in the reign of William IV. According to the author of *Magna Britannia*, Roger, Earl of Clare, who died 1173, confirmed to the monks of Bec, dwelling in Clare Castle, the gift of Gilbert de Bailol, of two parts of the tithes of Denardeston. We possess some reliable facts in regard to the chantry at Denston, the following being the substance of a patent roll granted by Edward IV. in 1474. The original is in Latin, much abbreviated, and written in legal phraseology, with the usual repetitions belonging to such documents.

It runs thus:—"The King to all whom these presents shall come Greeting; Know ye that we of our special grace, and out of sincere love and devotion and regard for the Holy and glorious undivided Trinity, and the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all saints—Grant and give license to our beloved and faithful John Howard, Knt., and our beloved John Broughton, Junior, Esq., and their heirs to the praise and honor of God, a certain Chantry for ever of one Prior and religious Society of Chaplains in the town of Denardeston, in the county of Suffolk, for our profitable state and our beloved consort Elizabeth—[She was daughter of Sir Richard Woodville, afterwards Earl Rivers, and widow of Sir

John Grey, a Lancastrian, who was killed in the battle of St. Albans. She was obliged, on accession of Henry VII., to enter a convent.]—Queen of England, and our eldest son Edward, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Count of Chester, also of the said John Howard, and John Broughton, and Anne his wife, and their heirs, and for our souls, when we have departed from this light, and for the souls of *John Denston* and *Katherine* his wife, of William Denston and Margaret his wife, of *Robert Clerk, Parson*, of John Marshall and Alice his wife, and that the aforesaid Chantry when it is thus made, founded, and erected, shall be termed *Denston's Chantry* for all future times to be so called and stiled, and that the said Prior and Fraternity of that Chantry may be fit persons, and efficient in the law, &c., further we grant and give licence for the aforesaid *John Howard* and *John Broughton*, when the said Chantry shall be built and constituted, the lands, and other possessions to the value of £40 per annum, and we grant to the aforesaid John Howard and John Broughton, without hindrance or disturbance to enjoy the same, being unwilling that the aforesaid Priors and Fraternity of Chaplains of the aforesaid Chantry be molested in any way. And in Testimony Whereof witness the King Himself, at Westminster, 1st March, 1474."

From a study of the painted glass in Melford church, we are able to obtain some information in regard to several of those persons named in the document just noted. There are three effigies of John Denston and Katherine his wife, and their only daughter, Ann, who married John Broughton. This is clear from the inscription:—"Pray for the soul of John Denston and for the happy state of Catherine his wife, daughter of Clopton, Esq., and of Anne Broughton, daughter and heir of the aforesaid John and Katherine." From the above we learn then, that Katherine, the wife of John Denston, of Denston Hall, was the daughter of Sir Wm. Clopton, and her only daughter Ann married Sir John Broughton, Knight. Putting all the foregoing facts together, and remembering that this fine church was built in connection with the chantry founded in 1474, in the reign of Edward IV., and suppressed by Henry VIII., in 1548, we are now able to explain why such a grand collegiate church came to be built in so retired, though albeit so picturesque, a spot. Our forefathers were great admirers of nature, as well as patrons

of art, and we find it an invariable rule, that when erecting their churches, colleges, and religious houses, they selected spots where the noble features of architecture and the glorious works of nature might be harmoniously blended.

HATCHMENTS.

In the north chancel (now used as a vestry) are some hatchments which Davy in his MS. (19,102) thus heraldically describes:—

1. *Robinson* : Az. on a chev. arg. betw. 3 bucks statant, or. 3 cinque foils gu. impaling
Elwes : or. a fess, az. over a bend, gu. dexter side, sa.
 2. *Robinson* as before impaling *Bromsall* : az. a lion rampant, or.
 Crest, *Robinson*, a buck passant. Dexter side, sa.
 3. *Robinson* as before impaling *Coates*, Quarterly, 1 and 4, 5 ermine spots, in saltire; 2 and 3 or. 3 pales sa.
 Crest, *Robinson* as before. Dexter side sa.
 4. In a lozenge the whole sa. *Robinson* as before, three bucks trippant impaling *Coates*.
 5. *Robinson* as the last impaling *Clive*, arg. on a fess sa. 3 mullets or. sinister side sa.
 6. On the groined stone roof of the south porch, there appears to be the following coat of arms: a fess between 3 mullets.
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