

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS IN ERITH PARISH CHURCH.

BY JOHN HARRIS.

IN the county of Kent there cannot be found a more diversified combination of wood, meadow, hill, valley, and river, than in the parish of Erith. In it Celt, Roman, Saxon, and Norman have successively left their traces of occupation: the Celts in their earthworks, and the *probable* riparian village; the Romans in those great earthbanks which bound the north part of the parish, and extend also for many miles on both sides of the Thames, confining the great estuary to its present restricted bounds; the Saxons and Normans in the old Parish Church of St. John, within which the Barons met King John's Commissioners in November 1215. The moated dwelling at Howbury, on the edge of the marshes, in the parish of Crayford, retains traces of an earlier building; may it not have been built for a defence against the Danes, who carried terror and havoc along the coasts of Kent? Time has obliterated all that existed of mediæval work, except the old Parish Church of St. John, and the small but interesting ruins of Lessness Abbey, which have suffered more from the hand of man than from the elements of nature. Some may view with indifference the crumbled relics which there meet the eye; to the more reflective beholder they will call to mind the haughty Becket, the penitent Henry, and Richard De Luci in his peaceable but brief retirement within the Abbey which he founded in A.D. 1178. The fine monumental brasses in the venerable church recall the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors. The spacious plain but substantial house at Belvedere, once the abode of the Eardleys, has a Hanoverian origin. The wealth and prosperity of Erith belong to the Victorian era. The crumbling walls of the Parsonage Farm bespeak an ecclesiastical residence of some importance. Of the old manor-house of Lesney only some portions of the garden wall remain to mark the locality in which it stood. A grove of fine old walnut-trees within the

grounds of the dwelling, built by the late Lord of the Manor of Lesney (John Parish, Esq.), most probably belonged to this old manor-house. These walnut-trees are grand in their decadence.

The church (85 feet long and 70 feet broad) is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Its chancel (33 feet by 16) is the oldest portion of the building: and may perhaps contain traces of Saxon work. Mr. W. G. Habershon, a good ecclesiastical architect, says, "Doubtless there are many isolated portions of Saxon work in Erith Church; some of them, notably, in the round arches" in the north wall of the high chancel at its eastern end. That a Saxon church existed in Erith (probably on the site of the present one) cannot be doubted, considering the importance of Erith at the early period of Saxon occupation. A British place of worship might have preceded it. When the recent enlargement and repair of the church were made in 1877, part of the south-west wall had become ruinous, exposing the centre or core. It was found to be built with rubble imbedded in mortar containing pounded tiles, which Mr. Roach Smith confidently asserted to be Roman.* This would indicate the existence of a former building, and the utilization of its wall when the south aisle was added to the church about A.D. 1200. A Pagan temple may have stood on the spot, or a lighthouse to guide vessels into the then existing haven. A very strong and great wall lies buried in the ground, on a line running from the south-west corner of the church to the ancient creek, which may readily be taken as the site of the harbour. The chancel of the church probably occupies the spot on which a small chapel or oratory stood in Saxon times. A careful investigation of the chancel-walls revealed traces

* Fragments of Roman tile have been worked into the south wall of the church.

Sir Stephen Glynne says of Erith Church, which he visited in 1849: "This church consists of a nave and chancel, each with wide south aisle. The walls are of rough flint and rubble. There are considerable First Pointed features. The tower may perhaps be of that date, but it is very plain. The south door is decidedly First Pointed, and has shafts with foliated capitals. There is a lancet at the west end of the south aisle; another on the north side. Most other windows are Third Pointed and square-headed, except the east window of the south aisle, which is Middle Pointed of three lights. The nave is divided from its aisle by a First Pointed arcade of wide arches, with circular columns having moulded capitals. There is no chancel arch. The chancel is mainly First Pointed; it has at the east end a triplet window, and is divided from the south chapel by a rude plain pointed arch upon imposts, with large masses of wall on each side. The roof is plain, with tie-beams and king-posts. There is a rood screen between the nave and chancel, of five compartments, containing Third Pointed tracery somewhat mutilated. There is the semblance of a staircase on the south of the rood screen. There is a late parclose screen between the chancel and south aisle."

of round arches in mural arcading and windows. In the north wall near the communion-table is a blocked-up, round-headed archway of *chalk*, 5 feet 3 inches high and 3 feet broad, with a stone sill about 1 foot wide. In the south wall is a splayed round-headed window, the opening being about 4 feet. Opposite, in the north wall, is a similar opening 34 inches broad; part of it being cut away to make room for a long splayed square-headed window, 6 feet high by 3 feet wide. This window is remarkable for the great depth of the bevelled sill, towards the floor; evidently thus splayed to give greater light. There are three small and deeply-splayed pointed clerestory windows, each 3 feet by 1 foot 6 inches. On the north and south walls are traces of *round* arches, all cut and mutilated. A small niche is on the south side of the communion-table, 2 feet high, 1 foot broad. Under another niche in the east wall beside the communion-table is a very badly carved figure (7 inches by 7) of a lamb carrying a cross (*Agnus Dei*). This niche (31 inches by 20) may have held a figure of St. John the Baptist, patron-saint of the church. From the chancel floor to its new roof is 28 feet. The roof is wagon-shaped, the spaces above the open rafters being covered with varnished boarding.

The old church underwent a complete restoration in the year 1877. A north aisle (50 feet long and 21 feet broad) was then added, and a north chancel built; the old vestry was removed to give room for this. A new porch was built at the south door; the tower (14 feet square inside, and 40 feet high) was almost entirely rebuilt, and a peal of eight bells was completed by the addition of two to the older six.* The chancel was fitted with stalls, and a stone reredos erected representing the Last Supper. An ornamental stone pulpit and a brass lectern were also added.

* The bells were taken down in June 1881, and re-hung in November 1882. The fifth bell (now the seventh) was recast, and two smaller bells were added. The bells bear the following inscriptions:

1st and 2nd. Mears and Stainbank. Founders. London, 1882.

3rd and 8th. Lester and Pack, of London. Fecit. James Marsh, Churchwarden. 1763.

4th. Mrs. Cornelia Bateman gave £100 towards these bells.

5th. James Marsh, Ch^b Warden, 1763. Lester and Park, of London.

6th. R. Phelps. Fecit 1703.

7th. (Before recasting) R. P. Fecit 1703; (after recasting) Mears and Stainbank, Founders, 1882.

Their weights without clappers are: treble, 4 cwt. 1 qr. 5 lbs.; 2nd, 5 cwt. 0 qr. 0 lb.; 3rd, 3 cwt. 1 qr. 19 lbs.; 4th, 6 cwt. 2 qrs. 13 lbs.; 5th, 8 cwt. 3 qrs. 4 lbs.; 6th, 9 cwt. 3 qrs. 12 lbs.; 7th, 12 cwt. 2 qrs. 12 lbs.; tenor, 16 cwt. 3 qrs. 22 lbs. Total weight of metal, 69 cwt. 2 qrs. 3 lbs. The smallest bell is 26½ inches in width across the mouth; the largest 44½ inches.

The east end of the new north aisle is made into a vestry and robe room, with space also for the organ; these are separated from the pews by a handsome pitch pine screen, with a door giving access to the chancel on the west side. A hypocaust was made beneath the vestry room to warm the church, and gas was laid on for lighting it. A blocked-up Norman window in the chancel has been opened, as well as the old north arch which now gives access to the vestry room. The Eardley monument was moved from the chancel to the wall of the north aisle. The new font is placed in the southern or Wheatley Chapel. The church had become ruinous from age, and the increase of population necessitated the enlargement of the edifice.*

Archdeacon Smith, speaking of a perforation in the south wall of the tower only a foot or two from the ground, says "it has every appearance of being coeval with the masonry of the tower, and has given rise to many a conjecture." May it not have been used as an accessory for a "Domus Anchoritæ"?† The opening being coeval with the tower, was built early in the thirteenth century, a time when religious recluses, called Anchorites, were very numerous. Anchorites shut themselves up in small cells or chambers, usually attached to some part of a church, or in a separate building in the churchyard, which they never left. The cells were kept constantly locked, and the Anchorite had no communication with the outer world. No particular part of the church was prescribed for the cells, only it was imperative to have an opening commanding a view of the chancel, through which to convey the eucharistic elements to the recluse. Twelve square feet was the required size of the chamber, according to *The Rules for Solitaries* published in Bavaria. Some Anchorites selected their place of seclusion high up in a steeple tower, the more readily to abstract the mind from the things of this world. It was of little consequence how they located themselves, so long as they were near or attached to a church. The austerity of the life of

* Exclusive of the bells, these works were done at a cost of £5755 18s. 10d. The new porch cost £408 6s.; the stalls £132 9s. 9d.; the church £4058 12s. 11d.; tower and steeple £692; shoring of tower and concreting foundation £89 10s.; work to seats, monument, gas, curtains, etc., £55; earthwork, graves, and asphalt-ing paths £139 13s.; earthwork at tower £35 12s. 10d. The balance of the expenditure was for incidentals. The money was raised by voluntary subscriptions; the cost of the bells by a fancy fair, held in Belvedere Park, July 1, 1882. The reredos and pulpit were the gifts of two old parishioners.

† Records of Anchorites in Kent are very rare. In Vol. XI. *Archæologia Cantiana*, Canon Scott Robertson gave an account of a Domus Inclusorum in Faversham churchyard.

an Anchorite gained the respect and admiration of the secular community, and from them were his daily wants supplied. Considering the nature and requirements of the recluse, is it not probable that the church tower was used as a chamber by one of that order? The opening, which is 18 inches by 6 inches, could be used for passing the daily food; and a blocked-up window in the east wall of the tower afforded an unbroken view of the chancel, the elevation of the host, and the eucharistic elements. This window, as Archdeacon Smith says, once gave light to the *solarium*, or room in the tower immediately under the bells. In the year 1388 the altar vessels and other church goods were kept in this "*solarium campanilis*" or upper room of the tower.*

Not the least interesting objects in the church are the mason's marks on the jamb of the south door. In early times workmen, as at present, travelled to distant parts to work. Writing was not in practice in those early days, so every artificer had his own mark; to copy or forge it was considered a grave offence and incurred heavy punishment. These marks are probably by the person who executed some work in the church. In the fourteenth century it was a prevailing custom, particularly in churches. Sometimes these marks were made in the inner side of the work and hidden from view, but more generally outside and easier to be seen. Possibly the external marks recorded the skill and good character of the individual. The great south door (10 feet high, $5\frac{1}{2}$ broad) is of oak, studded with great nails, and the marks of the adze shew its great age. The scroll-work of the door-hinges is very substantial. The width of the iron is 3 inches, and its length 4 feet. The scroll measures 2 feet, and at the upper end 11 inches. The knocker is gone. The latch-ring remains. The corbel-heads are of the usual type, grotesque and absurd.

The old sundial on the exterior of the south wall has two scrolls. One states that the dial was given in 1643 by Nicholas Stone. The other scroll bears an inscription: "Redibo, tu nunquam," filled in by the late vicar of the parish, Archdeacon Smith; who translated it, "I shall come back; thou never."

Erith may consider itself fortunate in having any of the monumental brasses left in the old Parish Church. The destruction has been great, and many of the stones in which brasses were fixed have been much disfigured. No less than nine brasses have been

* Archdeacon C. J. Smith's *History of Erith*, p. 87.

taken away; fortunately some of the nails by which they were fastened have been left to attest the size of the figures. A scroll at the top of Ailemer's brass is gone; one small brass, two shields, and one square from Hawte's monument are also wanting. The large stone on which are figures of three children is terribly damaged. It formerly had two shields and two figures 3 feet long, as we know by the nails remaining. One figure of the Mylner's brass is gone. The arms of the Wheatleys, Lords of this Manor, are finely and boldly cut in the stone slabs lying on the floor. Their crest is suggestive of their name, viz., "A wheat-sheaf grasped by the hands and upright arms." The armorial coat of William Hedges (Lord of the Manor) is also very elaborately carved on his monumental stone in the chapel floor.

Weever, on p. 336 of his *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, records the following inscriptions as once existing on brasses here:

1. Ellin atte Coke gist icy; Dieu de sa alme eit mercy.
2. Hic jacet Radulphus Criel armiger qui obiit 6^o Decembris 1447. Cujus anime propicietur altissimus.
3. Orate pro anima Domini Johannis Stone quondam vicarii ecclesie parochialis de Lesnes alias Erith, qui obiit 13^o Aprilis 1475.

"O vos omnes qui hic transitis pro me orate.
Precibus vestris qui fratres estis meque juvate."

4. An imperfect brass, with words only partly legible: Orate pro anima Ricardi Walden armigeri, et Elisabethe uxoris ejus, que obiit 25^o Octobris 1496 et Ricardus obiit . . . die . . . mens. Anno mil'm^o . . . quorum animabus . . .

5. Pray for the sowl of Syr Richard Walden, Knight, and Lady Margerie his wife, which Sir Richard decessyd 25 of March 1536, and Margery decessyd the sixth of May 1528. Whos sowls God pardon.

Dr. Thorpe, in his *Monumental Records of Kent*, published 1769, gives inscriptions of a later date. In the south aisle on a gravestone he saw this inscription:

"Here lyeth interred the body of William Seaman, late of London, who departed this life May 29, 1749, aged 43 years. Also the body of Mrs. Bridget Grundy, sister of the abovesaid, and wife of Mr. Richard Grundy of London, who departed this life July 9, 1755, aged 46 years." This stone is not now to be seen.

Thorpe also saw this fragment of an inscription in black letters on a brass:

". . . . Eldest daughter of Thomas Harman of Crayford, Esquier,

and wife to William Draper of Erythe, gent., who died the 17th day February 1574, and left in children two sons and two daughters, that is to say Thomas and Henry, Elizabeth and Bridget." This also has been taken away.

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE WHEATLEY CHAPEL.

The south or Wheatley Chapel (35 feet long and 22 feet wide) is lighted by three windows. That of three lights in the east wall is in the Perpendicular style, 7 feet broad and 14 feet high. Two on the south side are of Perpendicular style, with double lights each $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and 7 feet high. In the north wall is a stone stair, 2 feet wide and 6 feet high, with nine steps leading to a rood loft. Its upper door gives exit towards the west, and is only 18 inches wide; having been narrowed in the late restoration to give additional support to the new chancel arch. In the north-east is a hagioscope (or squint), 5 feet by 3 feet. In the south wall is a built-up doorway, $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 4 feet; apparently intended for a private entrance. On the floor is an old stone coffin, found in rebuilding the south porch, $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot deep; 2 feet wide at head, 14 inches at foot. A fragment, 16 by 14 inches, of a foliated stone cross, was found near the coffin. The carved figure on the top is too decayed to declare *positively* its age; it may be of the fourteenth century. On the floor of the chapel are the brasses; the elegant Shrewsbury monument, and the monumental records of the Wheatley family, from whom the chapel has taken its name. In the eastern part of the north wall there is a niche 20 inches wide. Its height is uncertain, a marble tablet being placed over it. The west wall of the south aisle has an old lancet window, 2 feet broad, 9 feet high.

All the brasses remaining are on the floor of this Wheatley chapel:

1. "Hic jacet Rogerus Sencler, quondam serviens Abbatis, et Conventus de Lesens, qui obiit primo die mensis Januarii, anno domini m^occcc^oxxv^o. Cujus anime propicietur Deus. Amen."

2. "Orate pro anima Emme uxoris Johannis Wode, civis Londoniar', et mercatoris stapule Calisie, quondam filie Johannis Walden, aldermanni civitatis London ac maioris stapule Calicie, que obiit xxvij^o die Augusti, anno domini m^oiiij^olxxj^o. Cujus anime propicietur Deus."

3. "Of yor charite pray for the soules of Edward Hawte,

esquier, & Elyzabeth his wyfe, which Edward decesid the xxth day of Septemb^r A^o dni. m^ov^cxxxvij. On whos soules Jhu have marcy.”

4. Fragments of a brass bore as an armorial shield a cotised bend between six martlets on one part, and three children on another part.

5. Two large and handsome brasses on one slab: “Hic jacet Johannes Ailemer, qui obiit ij^o die Mensis Decembris Anno domini Millmo. cccc^oxxxv^o, et Margeria uxor ejus. Quorum animabus propicietur Deus. Amen.”

6. Two figures on one slab, a third having been abstracted: “Pray for the sowle of John Mylner, Margaret and Benet his wyvis, y^e which John died y^e xxij day of September y^e yer of our lord m^ov^cxj. On whos solles Jhu have mercy.”

On a marble tablet on the chancel wall, over an altar-tomb.

“Under this tomb lyeth the body of Francis Vanacker, Esq., Lord of the Mannor of Erith. He departed this life the thirteenth of December 1686, in the 38 year of his age, who left surviving him Cornelia Vanacker his wife, and his two Brotheirs Nicholas and John Vanacker Marchants of London, who in affection to his memory erected this monument.”

The altar-tomb of the Vanackers is very handsome. It is 6 feet by 4 feet in width and height. The top slab is black marble; all other parts white marble. The west end is divided into three panels; the centre one has three cherubs in clouds; the two side ones fruit and flowers pendent. The south front has side panels similarly ornamented with fruit and flowers. The centre panel is large, encircled with flowers, and a plain medallion, evidently intended for the inscription which has been placed on the mural tablet above.

On the floor.

On the floor near the Vanacker tomb is a stone slab inscribed: “Here lyeth interred ye body of Mrs. Cornelia Bateman y^e wid^w of William Bateman, March^t, Lady of the Mannor of Erith, and formerly y^e widow of Francis Vanacker, Esq., deceased Lord of y^e said Mannor of Erith. She departed this life y^e 23 of September Anno Dni 1702 in the 49th year of her age, and has now left her brother-in-law S^r John Vanacker, Bar^t, & a Marchant of London, y^e present Lord of this Man^r who is y^e only surviving brother and Heir of her Said Husband Francis Vanacker, Esq., deceased. In memory of whom this stone was erected by her executor John Crawley son of Thomas Crawley of London, Marchant.”

Stone pinnaced monument at east end.

“To the memory of William Wheatley, Esq., Lord of this Mannor. Died June 20, 1807, 64 years of age.” Beneath the heraldic arms in front of the monument is, “I trust in my God.”

Four stone slabs on the floor.

Here lyeth interr'd the body of William Wheatley, Esquire, Lord of this Mannor who departed this life ye 2^d day of December 1745 aged 38 years. Here also lies interr'd the body of Mrs. Mary Hussey daughter and coheiress to John Slaney of Lulsley Court in Worcestershire, Esq^r. She was first married to the above William Wheatley, Esq., on whose decease she married to William Hussey, of Guildhall, London, Esq^r, and departed this life October the 2d, 1777, Aged 56 years.

Here lyeth the body of Margaret Salisbury Wheatley wife of John Wheatley, Esq^r, and Lady of this Mannor, who departed this life May ye 27th 1743, Aged 63. Also the body of John Wheatley, Esq., who died November 16th 1748, Aged 86 years.

Here lyeth the Body of Margaret Wheatley daughter of John Wheatley, Gent., by Margaret Salisbury his wife, who departed this life the last day of Decembr 1778, Æt. 19.

William Hedges, Esq^r, Lord of this Mannor. Ob^t 22d May 1734, Æt. 57.

Marble tablet on south wall.

Sacred to the Memory of Maria Margaret Wheatley youngest daughter of William Wheatley, Esq., of Lesney in this parish, who died 11th December 1812, aged 22 years. Also of George Wheatley, Esq., 4th son of the above-named William Wheatley, who died 27th March 1816 aged 35 years. Also of Lucy Margaret Wheatley eldest daughter of the above-named William Wheatley, who died January 22nd 1828 Aged 59 years. Also of John Wheatley, Esq., second son of the above-named William Wheatley, who died at sea 13th August 1830, on his return from India, Aged 57 years.

Marble tablet on south wall.

Vive Memor Lethi. Sacred to the memory of Margaret, daughter of John Randall, Esq., of Charlton in this county, and relict of William Wheatley, Esq., of Lesney in this parish. After a life passed in the exercise of every virtue, she died universally regretted by her family and friends, on the xx day of January M.D.C.CXXIX, aged lxxii years.

Mural tablet on south wall.

Sacred to the memory of Major General William Wheatley of Lesney in this county, Captain in the 1st Reg^t of Foot Guards, who having fought with honor and distinction in several engagements, particularly at the Battles of Lincelles and Barosa, died of a Fever at Madrid, Beloved and lamented by the whole Army, while in command under the Marquis of Wellington, September 1st, 1812, Aged 41 years.

Marble tablet on south wall.

Sacred to the Memory of Major General Sir Henry Wheatley, Bart., C.B. and G.C.H., died March 21st 1852, Aged 74. Sincerely loved and lamented Louisa relict of the above, and daughter of George Edward Hawkins, Esq., died April 1st 1858, Aged 77, deeply regretted by her family and friends. Their remains are interred in the family vault in this church.

Marble tablet on east wall.

Sacred to the Memory of William Owen Wheatley, eldest son of Major General Wheatley of Lesney in this county. Born 15th December 1796. He died at Pisa in Italy, the 4th March 1832, Aged 32 years. A Lieutenant of the Royal Navy and lord of the Manor of Lesney. Also of Charles Wheatley, third son of Major General Wheatley, born October 18th, 1800, he died at Malta 21st March 1822. An Ensign in the 23rd Foot. Aged 22 years.

Mural tablet on east wall.

In memory of Mary Catherine Hubertine, Widow of William Owen Wheatley, Esq., R.N., of Lesney House in this parish, and Wife of Charles Littlehale, Esq., late of Marnhull, Blandford, Dorset. Born 1st June 1805, died at Cannes in France January 15th 1871.

Marble tablet in the east wall.

Sacred to the memory of Georgina Louisa, eldest daughter of Sir Henry Wheatley, Bart., and Louisa his wife. Born November 29th 1807. Died December 9th 1864. Also to the Honourable Sophia, youngest daughter of the above, and Maid of Honour to H.M. Adelaide, the Queen Dowager. Born December 25th, 1817. Died May 23rd 1863.

Sacred to the memory of Harry William Wheatley, eldest son of Major-General Sir Henry Wheatley, G.C.H., and Louisa his

wife, who died 9th April 1819, aged 13 years. Also of Laura Maria Wheatley, second daughter of the above Sir Henry Wheatley, G.C.H., who died 14th February 1840, aged 28 years.

The Shrewsbury Monument.

The Shrewsbury monument is by far the finest in the church. A full-length effigy of a female is recumbent at the top. The head rests on a pillow, the hair is turned back from the forehead, covered by a close-fitting cap, and a tiara at the top of the head. The neck is encircled by a plain collar; a girdle fastens the ermine mantle which envelopes the body to the feet. The hands are clasped, with the arms folded across the chest. The mantle is decorated with figures and flowers. The pillow is also handsomely ornamented, resting on a folded mattress. The nose is slightly mutilated, and some figure has been taken away against which the feet rested. The north side of the monument is divided into three compartments, each with the armorial bearings of the family; those on the right surmounted by an earl's coronet. At the west side is a similar coat of arms, with coronet. The quarterings of the arms have been well coloured and gilded. This fine monument is unfortunately placed in a corner, so that much of its beauty is lost. If there is any inscription, it cannot be seen, as it is close to the wall. Weever says, "In the upper end of the south aisle of this church stands a fair tomb, with this inscription; left at the first imperfect: Elizabeth second wife to George, late Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Steward to King Henry VII. and to King Henry VIII. his household, by whom she had issue, John, and Lady Anne, wife to William, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Steward of Queen Elizabeth's household, which Lady Anne had been married before to M. Peter Compton, Esquire, by whom she had issue Sir Henry Compton, Knight, now living. This Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, was daughter and one of the heirs of Sir Richard Walden, Knight, Lord of the Town of Erith, whose body lieth here likewise entombed" (*Ancient Funeral Monuments*, p. 335).

It is much to be regretted that this monument was not moved from its present position to a spot where the beauty and richness of work could be viewed to greater advantage. An application for its removal was made when the church was under repair and extension. The present representatives of the Shrewsbury family were indifferent in the matter.

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE HIGH CHANCEL.

Stone slab within the altar-rails.

Here lyeth interred the Bodes of S^r John Griffith of Erith, K^t, and Dame Mary his wife. The said S^r John departed ye 17th of Octob^r 1677, Aged 59.

On the floor within the altar-rails is a stone slab.

To the memory of Dorothea Graham, the beloved wife of the Rev. Richard Davies, Vicar of this parish, who died 18th August 1823, aged 62 years. The Rev. Richard Davies, 47 years Vicar of this parish, departed this life 25 August 1849, in the 81st year of his age.

On a stone slab in the chancel floor.

Covered by the new stalls is the following inscription: "Here lyeth interred ye body of William Hobs, of this County, Gentleman, who had issue by Ann his Wife 7 children, 2 sonnes and 5 daughters, wherof one is deceased, he being Aged 61 years, and departed this life the 30th day of May 1657.

"Stay Reader stand and spend a tear
And think of mee that now lyes here.
And whilst thou read'st the state of mee
Think of the glass that runs for thee."

On one of two slabs of black stone, partly hidden by the stalls.

Here lies interred the body of Mr. James Marsh, late of this parish, who departed this life the 8th of April 1782, aged 85 years. Also the body of Mrs. Elizabeth Page, niece of the above, who departed this life the 19th December 1787, aged 66 years. Also the body of Mr. John Page, husband of the above, who departed this life . . . 1800, in the 75th year of his age. Also two of their grandchildren. To the memory of Mary Ann Haffenden, wife of Charles Dalby Haffenden, and daughter of Mrs. Elizabeth Butler here, and niece of James Page of this parish. She died in Spain on the 9th day of March 18 . ., in the 23rd year of her age, and was buried there.

On the second slab.

Here lies interred the body of Mr. John Page, of this parish, son of John and Elizabeth Page. He departed this life 30th November 1820, aged 65 years. Also of Mrs. Elizabeth Page of Beadonwell, daughter of Mr. John Page, who died the 12th June

1839, aged 4 . . years. Here also lies interred the body of Mr. James Page, brother of the above John Page. Also a son of Mr. John and Elizabeth Page. He departed this life on August 29th 1844, aged 84 years. Also the body of Mr. James Page of Beadonwell, son of the above Mr. John Page, and brother of Mrs. Elizabeth Butler. He departed this life April 28th 1853, aged 59 years.

On the south side, beneath the stalls.

In the vault beneath are deposited the remains of Lord Eardley, also of his son, S. E. Eardley, and of his granddaughter, Maria Countess de Gersdorff.

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE NAVE AND AISLES.

Marble tablet on north wall.

Sacred to the Memory of Mary the beloved wife of William Ackroyd of Mayfield Hermitage, Co. of Stafford, Esq., who died at Hampton in Middlesex the 9th day of January 1832, ætat. 76, and interred beneath this monument. She was Aunt to Marianne, wife of Robert Wynne Williams, youngest son of John Williams of Penartherchaf, Co. Merioneth, Esq., and was also lineally descended from Wolfridus, the founder of the Family of Rudyerd, near Leek, Co. of Stafford, who flourished in the reign of Edward the Confessor and Canute the Great, as the pedigree sets forth. Her unceasing affection and piety were remarkable through life, and her loss to her Husband and Niece is irreparable. Also to the Memory of Wynne William Rudyerd, the infant son of the abovenamed Robert Wynne Williams and Marianne his Wife, who died on the 6th March 1823, and who was interred beneath.

Marble tablet on north wall; formerly in the nave.

In this aisle are interred John Brown, 40 years Clerk of the Parish and Vestry of Erith, who died Dec. 28th, 1813. Also Mary Brown his wife, who died January 3rd, 1819. Mary Chater their daughter died Sept. 6, 1872. Thomas Armstrong Chater died December 6th, 1859. Also Thomas Armstrong Chater their son died May 6, 1836.

In the south aisle on a stone slab in the floor.

To the Memory of Mr. Thomas Holding and Mary his wife. He was born at Bedonwell in this parish on the 3rd December 1764, and departed this life at Greenwich, of which town he was many

years an inhabitant, on the 24th October 1844. Mrs. Mary Holding departed this life at Lewisham on the 27th April 1820, Aged 68 years.

Another Holding died 1844, aged 80 years.

In the nave.

Mrs. Hannah Poussett Obiit October 6th, 1784, aged 54 years.

Peter Poussett Died Sept. 15, 1810, aged 80 years.

On the west wall of south aisle is a small brass inscribed :

“This window is dedicated by some parishioners to the Memory of the late Charles John Smith, M.A., formerly Archdeacon of Jamaica, and for 19 years Vicar of this parish. Born April 13th 1819, died November 29th 1872.” This brass is under the stained-glass window.

Small brass on the pulpit.

Presented by George Frederick Webber in commemoration of the restoration of this church.

Brass in the clergyman's vestry.

June 24, 1877. The north aisle and vestries of this church were added, the roofs restored, the windows and walls repaired, and the interior refitted in the year of the Lord 1877.

T. W. HARDY, Vicar.	F. B. JESSETT,	} Churchwardens.
	F. BEADLE,	

Marble tablet in the clergy vestry.

Sacred to the Memory of Maria Countess de Gersdorff, the only daughter of Lord and Lady Saye and Sele, who, soon after the birth of her first and stillborn infant, departed this life 6th August, 1826. This tablet was erected by her afflicted parents as a memorial of her many virtues and their irreparable loss.

“With quick perception, sense, and fancy blest,
 Her lively glance her vivid mind exprest ;
 Above disguise and every-specious art,
 She always spoke the feelings of her heart,
 Where beamed, benignant, mild religion's ray ;
 Whilst social converse, would with sense display
 Each generous feeling, candid and sincere,
 Her faultless judgment, and ideas clear.
 Beloved Maria ! late a lovely bride
 In life's gay bloom, and youth's gay visions died ;
 Whilst weeping friends mourn o'er her early bier
 And strangers drop a sympathizing tear.”

The Eardley Monument on the north wall.

Before the recent alterations of the church this elegant white marble monument, by Chantrey, stood in the chancel. On the urns: "Honble. S. E. Eardley, Died May 25, 1824, aged 53." "Baron Eardley, Died December 25, 1824, aged 79." On the front of the monument: "Near this place are deposited the remains of the Right Honble. Baron Eardley, also of the Honble. S. E. Eardley, his eldest son. This monument was erected by 3 Sisters, the only surviving children of Lord Eardley, as a memorial of duty, affection, and gratitude to their lamented Father and Brother." On the left side: "Of this lamented parent and his son, it may truly be said, their generosity was great, their benevolence unbounded, and their Christian charity exemplary." On the right side is the text, Psalm xl. 6.

Respecting Maria, Countess de Gersdorff, daughter of Lady Saye and Sele, who was buried in the chancel of Erith Church, these lines are engraved on a marble pedestal standing in the yard of All Saints' Church, Belvedere:

"The glimmering twilight, and the doubtful dawn
 Shall see my steps, to this sad spot return ;
 Constant as crystal dews empearl the lawn,
 Shall my sad tears bedew Maria's Urn.
 Haply the Muse, as with unceasing sighs
 She keeps late Vigils on the Urn reclined,
 May see light groups of pleasant visions rise,
 Of phantoms glide, but of Celestial kind.

"Then young simplicity, adverse to feign,
 Shall unmolested breathe the softest sigh ;
 And candour with unwonted warmth complain ;
 And innocence indulge a wailful cry.
 Then elegance, with coy judicious hand,
 Shall cull fresh flowerets from Maria's tomb ;
 And beauty chide the fates severe command,
 That showed the frailty of so fair a bloom.

"And fancy then, with wild uncontrolled woe,
 Shall her lov'd pupils native taste explain.
 For mournful Sable all her hues forego,
 And ask sweet solace from the Muse in vain.
 But let us cease to mourn, blest spirit, at thy flight
 To scenes where sorrow wakes the sigh no more ;
 Where worth like thine, in Heavenly splendour bright,
 Shall meet a Saviour, and a God adore."

224 INSCRIPTIONS IN ERITH PARISH CHURCH.

On the urn are these words: "For the dead there are many mourners, But only one monument.—The heart which lov'd them best. Countess De Gerstorff, Ob. August 1826. This urn was erected to her memory by her disconsolate Mother." On the pedestal: "This monument, originally placed in the garden at Belvedere, was removed to this spot Oct. 1858."

COLOURED WINDOWS.

At the west end of the north aisle are two coloured windows. The west window has Scriptural illustrations of Matthew xiv. 14, and the following words: "To the glory of God. A thankoffering from D. Hulett for the recovery of his wife from a severe illness, March 1880." The north window has the figures of Saints Peter, James, and John, and the words, "To the Glory of God. A thank-offering from D. Hulett for the recovery of his wife from a severe illness, March 1880."

Near the east end of the north wall is a stained-glass window inscribed: "A memorial to Juliana Lesette Wood. Matris Dilectæ 1870." Over each figure is an inscription: "Moses Prophet," "John y^e Baptist," "Elijah Prophet." This window is to the memory of the mother of an eminent English naturalist, the Rev. J. G. Wood.

The stained glass in the chancel windows was inserted (by subscription) after the gunpowder explosion in the Erith Marshes, October 1st, 1864, which greatly damaged the church.

THE PARISH REGISTERS.

The early Parish Registers were almost all destroyed by fire, February 21, 1877, in the temporary wooden church, used during the restoration of the parish church. Fortunately, in the autumn of 1876, copious extracts had been taken for genealogical purposes by Mr. Robert Hovenden of Croydon, and his friend Dr. Howard. The baptismal extracts ranged from 1625 (the first entry in the Register) to 1752, and were in number 183. From the Marriage Registers 97 extracts were taken up to 1753. From the Burial Registers 75 entries. Twenty-five copies of these extracts have been printed by Mr. Hovenden for private circulation. The existing Registers date from the year 1813. Copies have been taken of all names on the tombstones in the churchyard, of dates prior to 1813.