



THE CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS,
WOODCHURCH.

BY THE REV. F. B. WELLS (RECTOR).

I AM not skilled in Archæology, and nothing but the circumstance that my position here has put me in possession of some special knowledge which is not at the command of others, would have induced me to describe this church. I shall, I think, best perform my part by simply drawing attention to the objects of interest, which still remain; and to others which, although decayed beyond the reach of restoration when the church was repaired, should not be forgotten.

But first I cannot suppress a reflection which suggests itself at the sight of such a building, viz., how it came to be built at all of such dimensions, in such a locality, and in such times. Besides a love of beauty and perhaps a feeling of laudable ambition, it must have required a liberal heart and a strong will to strive with the difficulties of those early days, to bring materials from the isle of Portland, or perhaps from Caen, in order to carry out the pious design of its founder, and build a church like this in the midst of wild and tangled woods—for the very name of the church tells us the character of the spot. We may imagine how some great proprietor, enriched perhaps with a grant of land for military or other services, but looking beyond the mere gain which he might derive from the pannage of his swine in the wild denes of this wealden district, be-

thought himself of the spiritual wants of his dependants. We may imagine how, at his call and through his liberal piety, some architect with his guild of masons and of carpenters, released, perhaps, from more ambitious work at the mother-church of Canterbury, made these wild woods resound with the axe and hammer, and raised this "*Church in the Wood*" to the glory of God, where many a generation of man has since worshipped during a period of some eight hundred years.

In sympathy then with the feelings which prompted the erection of this church, let us proceed to examine it, beginning with the belfry and Early English tower.*

1. Observe on the exterior the dripstone both over the doorway and the window, terminating with heads.†

2. The west window is new, designed by Ferry, who was employed in the restoration of 1858, of which more hereafter.

3. The clock, by Dent, was a gift from Mrs. Schreiber.‡

When I came to the living in 1841 I found the belfry boarded off from the church, and a huge gallery projected as far as the present position of the font. (The font at that time stood near the middle of the nave.) Beneath this gallery was a balustraded screen, very ugly, bearing a date, 1697, and initials, probably those of the churchwardens, R. C. and J. C.§ These still remain on the present screen, which was formed out of the old materials. All this was altered shortly after I came here, with the cordial co-operation of the churchwardens. At the same time a flooring, which was considered necessary to steady the ropes, but which only served to cut the west window in half, was replaced by the iron stays, an alteration much opposed at the time. They have answered the purpose perfectly well for nearly forty years, and the plan may safely be adopted in any church where it is required. I mention this with a view to the reform of belfries and bellringing, at this time advocated by Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Rector of Mersham.

Before you leave the belfry you should observe the four heads, two again, as on the outside, terminating the label over the arch; and

* The inscriptions on the six bells are as follows:—1. John Clarke and Gabriel Richards, Churchwardens, 1755; Lester and Pack, fecit. 2. 1623, Josephus Hatch, fecit. 3. Joseph Hatch made me, 1608. 4. Joseph Hatch made me, 1608. 5. 1608. Joseph Hatch made me. 6. John Clarke and Gabriel Richards, Churchwardens, 1755; Lester and Pack, London, fecit. The spire leans to the south, about eighteen inches out of the perpendicular, perhaps the cause of the large buttresses.

† Can any opinion be given of these heads? Some are crowned and well executed.

‡ Date of gift, August 1867.

§ Richard and John Clarke.

two on the pillars, which were evidently intended to terminate a label or dripstone over the S. and N. blind arches which was never completed; also more particularly the primitive parish chest, which may remind the classical reader of the "*Alnus Cavata*" of Virgil. I only wish that our hollowed tree had been a vessel freighted with some documents of more interest than a few old bills and some carefully kept parish books.

THE FONT.

We now come to the nave, and here first I draw your attention to the square Early Norman font. Its sides are carved with shallow arcading, and it stands on a circular stem with four angle-shafts. It was removed and placed as it stands at present in the restoration of 1848. At that time the whole church was refloored and re-seated with oak, besides many minor repairs. The font cover was given by Mr. Schreiber; it is said to be of the reign of Charles II.

THE NAVE ROOF.

The second great restoration was ten years later, when, in consequence of my absence from illness, Mr. Arthur Cazenove was acting as my *locum tenens*, and rendered most efficient service, with Mr. Ferry as architect, and Mr. William Smeeth as churchwarden. The nave roof, now open to the ridge, was then entirely renewed, and the west window restored.

THE NAVE PILLARS.

If you have read Sir Stephen Glynne's work, or rather sketch, on our Kentish churches, you may possibly have come here with the expectation of finding the pillars of this church of beautiful marble; but he seems to have been deceived by appearances, and, alas, "all is not gold that glitters."* I am obliged to confess the truth that what he thought to be marble is only chart-rock, scraped and polished some forty-five years ago with a preparation of beeswax and oil by Mr. W. Smeeth, a most zealous and indefatigable churchwarden, known for many good works of a less deceptive and questionable

* Sir Stephen Glynne says, "A fine church . . . of nave with N. and S. aisles; chancel with N. and S. chapels, of which the southern extends wider; a west tower and north porch. . . . The north porch has a circular staircase, and within it is a stoup. The prevailing features are very good Early English, and the interior is decidedly grand and imposing. The nave has on each side a good arcade of four arches, with pillars of black Bethersden marble alternately circular and octagonal. . . . The arches have hoods, and there is no clerestory. . . . The north and south walls have been rebuilt in the Perpendicular period. . . . The chancel is a remarkably beautiful piece of Early English work. It has a fine eastern triplet with excellent mouldings, and banded shafts. . . . On the north are three lancets, on the south two, set on a string, also with fine mouldings and shafts."

character than this. At the end of the north-west aisle I may ask you to observe two small flat-headed lights. What was the object of them, or rather of the recess which they lighten? Was it intended for a priest's room?

In the south-west aisle the two lower windows were copied exactly from the originals. The window (Decorated) immediately to the east of the south door I must be responsible for. In the north wall opposite, the doorway leading to the parvise is of course new, and the stonework still awaits some cunning hand to carve it.

The handsome north door was made in 1848 by Mr. Apsley of Ashford, copied from one at Peterborough Cathedral.

EAST END OF NAVE; AND THE CHANCEL.

I will now request your more critical attention to the east end and chancel, and for the sake of convenience I will include the pulpit, and the rood-loft which once existed, in this division of my subject. I must appeal to the knowledge of some present to correct or confirm the opinion which I have been led to form of this part of the structure as it originally stood, from certain marks which presented themselves in the walls during the progress of the repairs.

1. But before I do this, you should observe the beautiful Perpendicular oak panels (of the old rood screen) which now form the pulpit, the reading-desk, and organ-screen. They were found sadly mutilated and almost concealed beneath the deal "Three-decker" (pulpit, reading-desk, and clerk's pew), which then occupied the site of the present pulpit, and, with the rector's pew or room opposite, almost shut the altar out from view.

2. I call your attention to the well-known brass of Nicholas de Gore,* mentioned by Boutell as standing seventeenth in point of date among existing brasses. This was removed from the middle of the centre aisle to its present place for the sake of security. The stem was already gone when I came here.

ROOD-LOFT AND TWO STAIRCASES.

Now I very much require your indulgence and assistance as to the question of the rood-loft, of which the only parochial tradition

* The figure of a priest in full vestments, standing in a floriated circle of Flemish workmanship. Legend, in old French, in Lombardic characters, a doggerel rhyme, circa 1320, viz. :—

Maistre Nichol de Gore
Gist on ceste place
Jhesu Crist prioms ore
Qc Merci lui face.

that I ever heard is, that this was a gallery where the bows and arrows of the parish were kept in the olden times.

I must ask you to observe closely the stone steps and labelled doorway N.W. of the chancel arch, which lead to the pulpit, and which were walled up and concealed; also the string course on the wall $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the pulpit doorway. Now between this string course and the pulpit door there were found in the wall distinct marks of another low door, such as a wooden sill and side post with iron latch, all so decayed that they at once fell to pieces when the rubble, which filled up the space, was removed. Can this lost doorway have been the entrance to the rood-loft? I must ask you to look carefully at another door and staircase, in the north wall opposite, which, like many other things in this world, now lead to nothing. At the top of this second staircase there were also traces of wood-work, corresponding with those already mentioned as existing over the pulpit, seeming to shew that a slanting gallery sprung from that north doorway to the lost doorway above the pulpit.

On this point I should much like the opinion of experts, as I certainly am not qualified to pronounce an opinion, except so far as I am guided by the signs or traces just mentioned, and of which I can speak confidently, although they are now lost to sight.

TABLET TO MR. SCHREIBER, IN THE N.E. CHAPEL.

Some present may observe with interest a more modern work in the wall of the N.E. chapel. I mean the handsome tablet placed to the memory of the late Charles John Schreiber, Esq., of Henhurst, in this parish, so well known for his general liberality, but to be more fitly mentioned on this occasion as the munificent donor of the greater part of the oak timber,* enabling us to reseat the church with material, the most appropriate in this county.

HIGH CHANCEL.

We now proceed to the high chancel. My predecessor, Dr. Nott, gave the sum of £500 to the repair of this chancel, which was all expended on the roof, the reredos, and the altar-rail. This last is one of the happily few remaining specimens of the attempt to

* I understood at the time that this beautiful oak had been cut into planks and seasoned some eleven years before, and was intended for staircases, doors, etc., in a new building. Apsley told me it was worth 7s. 6d. a foot, but could not be purchased anywhere; he valued it at about £80, but said it could not be valued by the trade. It is hard as metal. I ought to mention that Mr. Peel Croughton of Heronden gave four fine oak-trees at the same time,

supersede the handicraft of the skilled carver, by the pressure of wood by steam.

In what I have called the great restoration of 1848, the old floor of the chancel was removed, and the ground-plan of the original floor then exposed was followed as closely as possible in repaving it with the present encaustic tiling. The large Harlackenden tomb, which at that time disfigured the N. wall of this chancel, being in a very dilapidated state, was rebuilt in the S.E. chapel; on removing it the aumbry, with depressed shoulder'd arch, which now serves for a credence table, was discovered; and we fitted it with a slab of Bethersden marble. This was done with the approval of Mr. John Henry Parker. The slab is a good specimen of the difference between the Purbeck and the Bethersden or Petworth formation.

The fact should not be omitted, in speaking of the floor of this chancel, that it was formerly about seven inches below the level of the nave, from which it was descended by a step. The line of this step you will see marked by a row of encaustic tiles.

I suppose that it is unnecessary for me to say anything of the "Squints," if we are contented with plain English terms, or Hagioscopes, if we wish to display our learning. In the centre window you will see the only remaining piece of old glass of any interest in this church. The subject appears to be the entombment, probably of our Lord or the blessed Virgin.

Before you leave this chancel, you will observe the beautiful trefoil arches of the double piscina; and next to them the three sedilia. With the floor at its present level, it certainly would be an impossibility for any one with legs of the ordinary length to sit there.

SOUTH CHAPELS.

I speak of this part of the church in the plural, because it was formerly divided into two chapels. This is shewn by the stoup in the middle of the south wall, and is further proved by a division in the roof, which was originally built in two elevations. These chapels were restored in the second or third year of my incumbency.

ALTAR-TOMBS.

The large altar-tomb in the middle is the one already mentioned as removed from the high chancel. It is raised to the memory of Thomas Harlackenden, and on the top of the marble slab which covers it (of Purbeck, not Bethersden marble) you will find some loose brasses to the memory of the same individual. The Latin legend on the brass border round the tomb is modern, and had the advantage of Archbishop Howley's valuable criticism.

Behind this stands a tomb, in the corner, against the S. wall, though not so handsome, yet far more interesting. It is the tomb of Edward Waterhouse, of whom Mr. Furley, in his most interesting history of the Weald, tells us that he was Queen Elizabeth's Chancellor of the Exchequer. The legend round it only mentions that he was one of Queen Elizabeth's Privy Councillors employed in Ireland.* He died, or at least was buried, in this parish, in the year 1591. If I had time I could tell how his name was brought forward in the House of Commons during the discussions on the Disestablishment of the Irish Church.† I must leave the armorial bearings with the numerous quarterings over this tomb to those who are learned in such matters.

Again, if I had time, I should have wished to read a few short extracts concerning one Roger Harlackenden, and the state of the parish in those days, copied very kindly at my request by Canon Scott Robertson from the presentments made at the visitation of Archbishop Warham, A.D. 1511. I am afraid they will not do much credit to the Woodchurch of that day, and may possibly disenchant some of our friends who are enamoured with the supposed ideal of unity and concord which blessed the pre-Reformation period.

A.D. 1511.—*Presentments made at the Visitation of Archbishop Warham respecting Woodchurch.*

That Roger Harlakenden is a common oppressor of his neighbours whom none loveth.

Item that he is meddling of many matters, and will check the parson and the priests that they cannot be (at) rest for him.

Item that he bringeth into his house regular men to sing mass in an oratory with him, by what authority we cannot tell.

[He denied that he had done so except in time of sickness, which, in his opinion, he had a right to do.]

Item that upon St. Thomas's Day, three years ago, the keys were taken away by him, and there was no mass nor matins sung there that day.

[He denied that he was the person who withdrew the keys.]

Item that he jangleth and talketh in the church when he is there, and letteth others to say their devotions.

[He denieth this, but he was enjoined that in time of service he

* "Edwardus Waterhouse, miles, Reginæ Elizabethæ, a consiliis Regni sui Hiberniæ."

† He married Debora, widow of Martin Harlackenden, 1586, and lived only five years after. (Record in the Parish Church Register.)

should be praying sitting in his seat, and not talking with anybody in the church under pain of excommunication.]

Item that the chancel hath need of reparation both above and beneath.

[The Rector was enjoined to do all that was necessary.]

Item that the body of the church is unrepaired.

[The churchwardens were enjoined to repair the nave before the day of St. John Baptist.]

Item that Thomas Withersden holdeth two women suspiciously.

[N.B. He has now left the diocese.]

Item that the executor of Wm. Bocher withdraweth a certain bequest of William Harlackynden, to the which the said William Bocher was executor, and denieth to pay it; the sum of 20 marks, which sum Roger Harlackynden as executor ought to pay.

[Roger H. denied his liability, and the churchwardens failed to prove it at a subsequent court held at Lydd.]

Item that the heirs of Margaret, late wife of John Browne, withhold a chalice of 40s. and a lamp of 20s. from the church.

[Paid.]

Item that Robert Scott of Halden, executor of Robert Typenden, oweth for a bequest of R. T. £5.

[Robert Scott is dead, and there is no hope of payment.]

Item that the same Robert Scott oweth for a bequest of Robert Brown 6s. 8d.

The only other object to which I need draw your attention is the painted window above you—not so much however as a work of art, as a just tribute to the memory of a very excellent and useful man, Mr. William Smeeth, and for thirty-five years our active churchwarden.

It only remains for me to express the gratification which your visit to this church has given us. I imagine that such visits must give a stimulus to those who, being cut off from the busy world, may be inclined to fall asleep in these out-of-the-way corners of the land, and may probably excite a spirit of emulation to adorn, or at least to keep in order, these sacred edifices; and, by so doing, to promote higher and more spiritual feelings which are certainly much needed in these latter days.

NOTES.

I have drawn up a few notes relative to the last of the Clarke family—once famous in this parish; and also a speculation on the strange name of our inn, the Bonny Cravat. The sign is unique in England.

In the 'Dictionnaire de l'Académie' I find:—"Cravate, sf., d'un drapeau, l'ornement de soie brodé d'or, ou d'argent, qu'on attache comme une cravate au haut de la lance d'un drapeau et dont les bouts sont pendants" (knot of a flagstaff; colour-knot).

"Cravate, sm., corruption de Croate, cheval de Croatie, milice a cheval Regiment de Croates."

It is easy to infer that some young adventurer from Woodchurch, a second Captain Dalgetty or Butler (see Schiller's "Wallenstein," Coleridge's translation), enlisted as a "free lance" in this Croat Regiment, and came home proud of his colours and his service. We ought to have as a sign a gallant Croat, mounted, bearing the colours, instead of a "Neck-tie." "Jenny, come tie up my Bonny Cravat." Larwood and Hotten, in their history of "Sign Boards," seem just to have missed this conjecture. They say the fashion of wearing this article of dress was said to have been brought over from Germany in the seventeenth century by some of the young French nobility who had served the Emperor in his wars with the Turks, and had copied this garment from the Croats.

CLARKE FAMILY.—A few years ago Lieut.-Colonel James, then of Hyde Park Terrace, called on me in company with Mr. Terry, churchwarden, anxious to discover any traces of the Clarks, with whom, I think he said, he was connected by marriage. He told us that one of the Clarke family, a Royalist, served with James II in Ireland, and afterwards fled with him to France, where he rose by military service and was ennobled. That at some time early in this century, one of the family, I understood him to say, the "Maréchal," visited Woodchurch and inquired about the family; that being a draughtsman he took a sketch of the church, and that in the portrait of this "Maréchal" of France in the picture-gallery at Versailles, forming the background of the picture, there is a representation of this church.* A probability of this story is found in the following circumstances:—First, I found, curiously enough, in reading a book sent to me unordered, 'An Inland Voyage,' by R. Louis Stevenson, along the rivers and canals in S. Belgium and N. France, the following passage: "At Landrecies (now Cambrai) we visited the church. *There lies Marshal Clarke.* But neither of us had heard of that military hero;" and so they did not trouble themselves about him or his monument. Judging from the French extract below, he is as well forgotten.

A MILITARY "VICAR OF BRAY."

"Clarke (H. Ju-Gu, Duc de Feltre), homme d'état; Landrecies 1769-1818. Il fut ministre de la guerre (1807) sous Napoleon, qu'il avait été Chargé de Surveiller par le Directoire, et qu'il abandonna pour Louis XVIII, qui le nomma une seconde fois ministre (1815) et Maréchal de France (1816). Il signa l'acte d'accusation contre Ney et ce fut sous son ministère que furent constituées les cours prévotales."—*Biographie Portative Universelle*, Paris, 1853.

COPIES OF INSCRIPTIONS.

THOMAS HARLAKYNDEN.

Here under this tombe restithe in the mercy of God the bodyes of Thomas Harlakynden esquier Elizabeth and Margaret his wyves trusting on the Resurrection of the last day which Thomas decessyd the 25 day of August Anno dom. M^ov^oLVIII and y^e said Elizabeth dyed y^e iii day of Aprell An^o M^ov^oXXXIX and Margaret deceisid y^e day of A^o M^ov^o on whose soules Jh^u have mercy.

* So far verified: in the autumn of last year my sisters, being at Versailles, at my request inquired, found the picture, and procured me an engraving of it (now in my possession), with Woodchurch spire in the distance.

Legend (modern Latin) round the tomb (restored) of Thomas Harlakyn den.

"Hoc monumentum Thomæ Harlackendeni memoriæ sacrum vetustate jam pænè dilapsum, suis impensis reficiendum curavit Thomas Carolus Burt piè sollicitus, ne, marmore dilapso, veteris et honestæ familiæ memoria ipsa dilabatur."

INSCRIPTION ON THE BRASS IN FLOOR OF SOUTH CHAPEL.

"Here lyeth the bodie of Martin Harlakinden esquier whose Christian fayth was well approved by his lyfe, his zeale was great to see pure religion established with a full and perfect reformation. Blessed art thou reader and whosoe shall desire the same to the Glorie of God, he died the vijth of Januarie 1584 leaving by Debora his wife y^e daughter of Thomas Whetenhall, Debora Harlakinden his only child."

WATERHOUSE INSCRIPTION.

"Edward^s Waterhouse Miles Regine a consiliis regni sui Hiberniæ Obiit 13 die Octobris 1591."

WOODCHURCH COMMUNION PLATE.

Communicated to me by Mr. WILFRED CRIPPS.

I. The plain chalice (or more properly the Communion cup) on conical stem was made in 1635, but the form of the Hall-mark (S.) is a very unusual one. It is found on a piece of plate at Clothmakers' Hall, London, but most examples have a different letter. The maker's mark is I.A.G. in linked letters, and is not a well-known one. W. is that of a London maker. The conical foot is, probably, about forty years younger than the cup; perhaps it was repaired about 1670 or 1675. The paten is of the date and make of the cup.

II. The large paten on a foot is of the year 1707, the year mentioned in the engraved inscription. It was made by a silversmith named John Boddington, who also made the flagon at North Cerney Church near Cirencester, and a coffee-pot that has been in my own family for many years. He was a well-known maker. It is of the higher standard silver used from 1697 to 1720.

III. The tall flagon is of ordinary silver, made in 1723, the year of the inscription upon it, by a man who I do not know, but who made an alms dish, given in this very same year to St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, and other plate of the same period.

IV. The dish is, alas, of pewter.

