

NOTES

NORTH CRAWLEY. *Cleaning and Conservation of screen.*

Thanks to a generous grant by the Pilgrim Trust it was possible to start work on the treatment of the fine chancel screen in the Autumn of 1973. It is the only completely painted example in the whole of Buckinghamshire and correspondingly important. Some tests were made several years ago, which drew attention to the depressing state of the screen and proved the possibilities of cleaning. The figures on the panels were extremely dim, being covered with dark, decayed varnish; and all the rest of the screen was nearly black, being oak-grained, varnished and treated with linseed oil.

The figures (6 Prophets on each side, and 4 Saints on the centre doors) have responded very well indeed to cleaning; and the work has revealed that the four panels on the centre doors are by a different hand from the rest, and the details of the tracery and mouldings are also different here.

The removal of the oil, varnish and oak-graining from the rest of the screen is proving a long and tedious task. A wide variety of solvents and neutralisers has had to be used, since the different pigments and gilding react in different ways to various materials, and this has inevitably slowed the work. In spite of this, a substantial part of the medieval scheme of colouring remains beneath, with the usual red and green predominating, with white and gold. The round mouldings have barber's poling in black and gold or red and white. The whole of the coving and bressumer is original, the compartments of the vault having been blue, a notoriously unstable pigment, of which little survives. In each compartment is a raised feature which would seem to have been a base for some ornament—a metal or gesso star or rose. There is a suggestion of an inscription on the front of the bressumer beam. About one quarter of the screen has been dealt with; and it is hoped to resume the work in 1974.

E.C.R.

HEDGERLEY GREEN. *Re-use of medieval material in an out-building.*

Attached to Leith Grove, Hedgerley Green, is a small building constructed with small, roughly square blocks of clunch, a material not found in any other building nearby. This had for some time suggested that the stones had come from the 12th century church of Hedgerley re-built or drastically restored in the 18th century, and again in the mid 19th century. Lipscomb says (Vol. IV, 509) it was re-erected about

1770. The Victoria County History (Vol. III, 281) gives the earlier date as 1767 and mentions a rate then levied for the restoration. This would fit in well with the apparent date of the Leith Grove building. The 18th-century church was pulled down in 1852 and the present building erected north of the old site, the architect being Benjamin Ferrey who had been employed by the Duke of Somerset to re-build the present house at Bulstrode. The removal of creeper and other plants recently gave opportunity of a close inspection. This disclosed graffiti on many of the stones, and parts of at least three consecration crosses scribed in the surface, giving clear proof of the ecclesiastical origin of the material.

E.C.R.

DENHAM CHURCH. *Discoveries in the North aisle.*

In October 1973, removal of defective flooring in the North aisle revealed an exceptionally large ledger-stone fixed in position. Although the slab was slightly damaged during its finding and its inscription was somewhat worn, what remained (inclusive of a shield of arms: A chevron engrailed ermine between three garbs, for Hill, on a lozenge) was sufficient to identify it with the 'ordinary stone in the pavement of the north aisle', bearing the same arms, of Elizabeth (d.1759) and William Hill (1783).¹ More interesting than this, however, was the access to a vault made by accident when the sub-floor was breached.

In the vault were several coffins (seemingly about six, but some had rotted away), mostly leather-covered. The uppermost on the north side bore a coffin-plate whose inscription showed this to be the resting-place of Dame Abigail (d.1737), widow of Sir Roger Hill.² There was nothing to identify any of the others, but resting on one of them was a small leaden box, and this contained what must be the Peckham heart.

The altar-tomb of Sir Edmund Peckham (d.1564) stands in the chancel, and nearby, mounted on the wall, is his son's ledger-stone. From the latter's inscription, we learn that Sir Robert (although lord of the manor of Denham Court, like his father before him) 'went to see Rome [whence Sir Edmund had exiled himself in 1564, because of his Catholic beliefs³], where he departed this world in 1569, "making a vertuous and blessed Ende, and willinge his Harte to be browght over and buried in this church in the vaulte of his ancestors", though his body was 'entombed in the church of St. Gregory in Rome'.

The church of San Gregorio Magno, which stands on the Caelian Hill, not far from the Colosseum, has particular significance for the English, since it was in this church and the convent adjoining that SS. Gregory and Augustine planned the conversion of England to Christianity. In the atrium of the church are the tombs of Sir Edward Carne (d.1561), who was Henry VIII's ambassador to Rome, and of Sir Robert Peckham (1569). The latter's Latin epitaph is translated thus⁴: 'Here lies Robert Peckham, Englishman and Catholic, who, after England's break with the Church, left England because he could not live in his country without the Faith, and, having come to Rome, died there because he could not live apart from his country'.

It is pleasant to know that Sir Robert's wishes were faithfully carried out; his heart remains where he intended, although it was not interred in Denham parish

¹G. Lipscomb, *History of the County of Buckingham* IV(1847),457: there the chevron is given as a saltire, in error.

²Cf. Lipscomb, *op.cit.* IV,456.

³V.C.H. Bucks. 111,257; *D.N.B.*, sub Edmund Peckham.

⁴P. Caraman (ed.), *The Other Face* (1960),141.

church until 1586. As it happens, an account of an earlier discovery has survived. In the words of 'Mr. Steele': "As I came accidentally into the Church, Sept. 25, 1711, a vault at the E. end of the N. Isle being opened (for the interment of Edw. Lockey, Esq.), into which I went, and found a small Box of Led, fashioned like a Heart, but flatt, being scarce 2 inches in thickness, with the Lied sawder'd, but the under parte corroded; the Heart of Sr Robert Peckham discovered itself, rapt within several cloths, and still smelling strong of the embalment. On the Lide was writte this inscription:

*I.H.S. Robertus Peckham Eques Auratus, Anglus, Cor suum. Dulciss. patrie majorg. Monumentis commendari obiit 1 die Septembris MDLXIX'*⁵

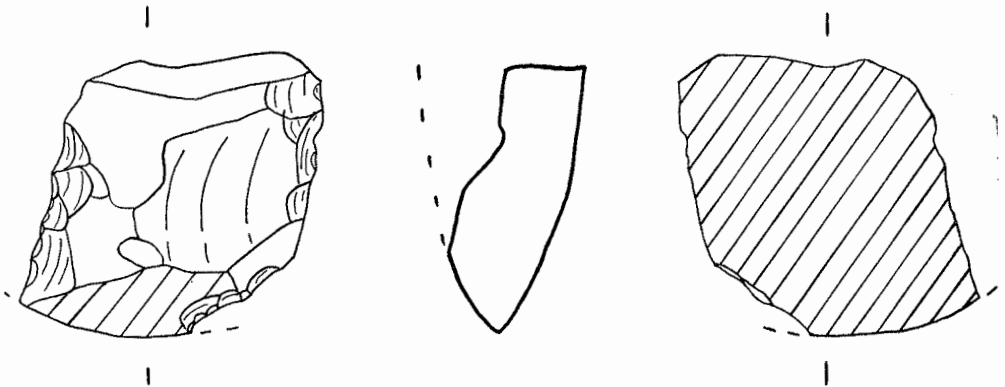
When recently exposed, there was no sign of either the box's lid or the 'several cloths' that Steele noted, but otherwise both the heart and its case seemed intact. However, for their better preservation, the box and its contents have been placed inside a plastic container, and a brief note of the re-discovery enclosed therein.

J. E. G. Bennell.

NEWPORT PAGNELL. *A polished stone axe from Kickle's Farm.* A fragment of a polished stone axe was found at the North-east end of the copse between Kickle's Farm, Newport Pagnell and the River Ouse. The grid reference is SP 8678 4513. The find was made in May 1973 by Peter Cresswell of the Open University who has generously donated the find to Bradwell Abbey Field Centre, Milton Keynes (Accession Number 1973/68). The axe fragment appears to have been rechipped for use along one side at least as a scraper.

The axe was submitted to Professor Shotton for petrological examination. He reports that it is of epidotised andesitic ash from Langdale, Group VI.

H. S. Green



0 5 Cm

Kickle's Farm

REDUNDANT CHURCHES. The workings and results of the Pastoral Measure 1968 are beginning to become apparent. The process is a lengthy one lasting at least three years, and it should be stressed that there is opportunity for consultation and objection at each stage. Four stages are involved and these are:

⁵Lipscomb, *op.cit.* IV,458,453.

The Diocesan Pastoral Committee may declare a church redundant for pastoral or ecclesiastical reasons after consultation with the parish and other interested parties. If such a presentation is made then

The Diocesan Redundant Churches Uses Committee has to decide on the future of the building and its contents. There are various alternatives which include:

- a. Demolition and sale of the site.
- b. Conversion to an alternative ecclesiastical use e.g., for another denomination or to a secular use which might include a village hall, a museum, a private dwelling.
- c. Preservation intact.

Alternative uses under (a) and (b) are ultimately a matter for the Church Commissioners who are the legal owners.

The Redundant Churches Advisory Board, a national, not a diocesan body, can advise on whether a church should be preserved for architectural, historic or aesthetic reasons. It can also veto a proposal to demolish as it has at Foscott. If they so advise the church is ultimately handed over to

The Redundant Church Fund which will maintain the church for the future using funds granted by Parliament for this purpose.

The position in Bucks at the end of 1973 was that seven churches have been declared redundant: they are

Fleet Marston, St. Mary. A small, solitary 14 c. church just off the Aylesbury-Waddesdon road, unused for some years. Accepted by R.C.F. and under repair.

Foscott, St. Leonard. Small 14 c. church east of Buckingham. A proposal to convert to a dwelling has been opposed by the Society.

Grove, St. Michael. A solitary 14 c. small church on the bank of the Grand Union canal north of Cheddington. Probable conversion to a dwelling.

Hartwell, Assumption BVM. This most interesting Gothick church, built by Henry Keene for Sir William Lee in 1755 beside Hartwell House, has been a roofless ruin since 1946. It will not be restored but is being made safe and will be accessible. It is an integral part of the fine 18 c. layout of Hartwell Park.

Pitstone, St. Mary. An admirable church of 13-15 centuries, now overshadowed by a vast cement works and only one mile from Ivinghoe. Accepted by R.D.F. It might become a museum for fittings from other redundant churches in the county.

Skirmett, All Saints. A small modern church north of Hambleton. Its future use is uncertain.

Stony Stratford, St. Mary Magdalen. This only concerns the tower of the 15 c. church which is all that survived the fire of 1742.

There are other churches which are under consideration for redundancy which include Great Kimble, Great Woolstone, Hardmead, Walton and West Wycombe, St. Paul. Little Linford which was threatened with redundancy has been reprieved.

E.V.

HUGHENDEN. *Grange Farm, Widmer End*. Though ruinous contains the timbers of a small base-cruck hall in very good condition. It was recently threatened, but an appeal to the Department of the Environment was followed by a prompt inspection, and the building is now listed. It is hoped to publish a detailed account of the Farm in the next issue.