

THE DESECRATED CHURCHES OF BUCKING- HAMSHIRE.

(*Continued from Page 126.,*)

DEANERY OF MURSLEY.

In this Deanery there are several desecrated Churches to be noticed, but Creslow, the first in alphabetical order, will now be passed over, that a more complete account of it may hereafter be given.

11. DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP, although so small a parish in point of population, is more than seven miles in length, and at its northern extremity is a small hamlet, which anciently was called Helpsthorpe, but by vulgar parlance it has been corrupted into Elstrop. This hamlet formerly possessed a Manor-house and a Chapel-of-Ease, both of which have long since disappeared. Of the Chapel but little can now be ascertained. Neither the name of the founder nor the date of the foundation is known. Still sufficient evidence can be adduced to prove that a Chapel once existed here. The first indication of it which I have met with is the following :— "Ralph de Helpsthorpe was presented to the Vicarage (of Drayton) by Milo Parson, of Draiton, with the consent of William de Bellocampo (Beauchamp), and was admitted 1223.*" As it was customary at this period, and long afterwards, to surname Priests by their Incumbencies, Ralph de Helpsthorpe was most probably the Incumbent of the Chapeliy at Helpsthorpe. The following notice is decisive :— "Anno 12, Richard II. (1388), John Melton Persona de Drayton habuit Decimas de Drayton Ecclesia cum Capella de Helpsthorpe eidem annexa."† This is the last record of the Chapel known, and probably soon after this date it became disused, as no further notice is taken of it among the presentations to the Rectory of Drayton.

Among Browne Willis's miscellaneous notes on Drayton Beauchamp occurs the following observation:— "At Helpsthorpe, in this parish, was a Chapel-of-Ease to Drayton, which was dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The

* Browne Willis's MSS. † Browne Willis's MSS.

site is called the Chapel Yard, and here are closes called Great and Little Trinity Fields and St. John's Field."*

In the Survey Map of Drayton Beauchamp, which was made in 1839, no such names occur at Helpesthorpe, nor can I find that any fields there are now known by such names. There is, however, a traditionary belief in the existence of a Chapel, and occasionally sculptured stones, supposed to have formed parts of its windows or doors, have been dug up, but no human remains that I have heard of. It is, indeed, probable that it was not a burial place, as its former inhabitants have generally been buried at Drayton. There are at present only three houses at Helpesthorpe, with a population of about sixteen persons, a number which, according to modern notions, would not justify the maintenance of a separate Church. It is, however, a pleasing trait in the character of our wealthy ancestors that they appear to have considered it their duty to provide Houses of Prayer for their dependants, however few, rightly judging that the means of grace are requisite, not because the population may be large, but because every individual soul, as a sinful erring creature, needs that spiritual sustenance which an Allwise and Benevolent Creator has provided for its Redemption and Salvation.

In the present instance, a new arrangement of parishes would be the best way of providing for the spiritual wants of Helpesthorpe. It is only half a mile from the Church of Wingrave, and two Churches, one two miles distant, the other three, both in the County of Hertford, stand on the direct road between Helpesthorpe and its Parish Church of Drayton, which is more than five miles distant.

12. EDDLESBOROUGH lies at the eastern verge of the county, on the borders of Bedfordshire. Towards the southern extremity of this parish, and about a mile off the Icknield-way, is a large hamlet, called Dagnall, containing four or five hundred inhabitants. As seen from the neighbouring eminences, this hamlet has a picturesque and romantic appearance. Farm-houses and cottages, many of them being of early date, appear scattered over an undulating, well-wooded valley, formed by the circuitous course of the Chiltern Hills, which are here un-

* Browne Willis's MSS.

usually lofty and diversified. This hamlet had a Chapel-of-Ease, dedicated to All Saints, or All Hallows, which "Lyson's" says was a Chantry Chapel, but its existence prior to the institution of the Chantry is clearly indicated by the following notice :— "Henry, Bishop of Lincoln, granted a license, A.D. 1322, to Sir Henry Spigurnell, Knt., to find a Priest to sing Mass daily in the Chapel of Dagnall."* This license further states that "it was of great ease to the most part of the parishioners, because many of them dwelt four miles from the said Parish Church, who resorted to the Chapel of Dagnall to hear Divine Service there." From this record, as well as from another in which allusion is made to the "Advowson of the Church of Dagnall, it is evident that the Chapel was originally designed for public worship, and that the Sepulchral Chantry was an additional and subsequent foundation. In 1393, John Houchens, Incumbent of the Chapel of Dagnall, in the parish of Eddlesborough, exchanged with Robert Claypole for the Vicarage of Little Kimble. The Chantry was suppressed about 1549, when its endowment was valued at £3 18s. 8 1/2 d. yearly, "over and besides all Reprises." There was also some land, and a messuage called the Manse, or Priest's house, belonging to the foundation. Sir Laurence Draper, the Incumbent at the time of its suppression, was non-resident, having also a Benefice in Cambridgeshire,† In 1550, the Chapel of Dagnall "with the stone walls, bells, lead, and waste land to the said Chapel belonging," were granted to Thomas Reeves and others, "their heirs and assigns, for ever." ‡

It is not known when this Chapel was demolished. There are no remains of it now existing, nor have any existed, so far as I could learn, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant of the hamlet. Indeed, its site is not exactly known, although its vicinity is indicated by places still bearing the names of "Chapel Dell," "Chapel Lane," and "Chapel Wick." "Chapel Dell," which appears to be the remains of an ancient moat, and "Chapel Lane" form the boundary on two sides of a small croft now occupied by a cottage and orchard. This croft, which is about three roods in extent, and contains some inequalities of ground,

* "Lipscomb," vol. in., p. 352. † "Lipscomb," vol. in., p. 352.

‡ Browne Willis's MSS.

as if caused by the buried remains of some demolished building, I take to be the site of the ancient Chapel and Chapel-yard. Its opposite sides are bounded by a carriage road containing the old stocks, and an open space, which may have been a small village green. The bank behind the stocks, although a quarter of a mile from the main part of the present hamlet, still bears the name of the "Town Bank." About thirty yards from this croft are the remains of the old Manor-house, a portion of which is still occupied by cottagers. About twenty yards distant, on the other side of the croft, is "Chapel Wick," which may contain five or six acres, and is used as allotment gardens, and is probably the land referred to as belonging to the Chapel at the time of its suppression.

This large hamlet, which is two miles from the Parish Church, has the appearance of a little town, containing various shops and a respectable looking inn; yet, although it has apparently greatly increased in population, it has been deprived of its ancient House-of-Prayer, where formerly daily service was performed, and no other has been erected in its stead. The Endowment, which has also been alienated, would now have been about the same value as that of Little Kimble, with which it was exchanged, and which stands in the Clergy List as £107 per annum.

About a mile from Dagnall, on the Chiltern Hills, near the Icknield-road, are some ancient earthworks, and a small circular mound called "Gallows Hill." In the latter, I was told, several human skeletons have been found by workmen digging for stones or sand.

13. HORTON is a large hamlet or township which, although included within the circuit of a quarter of a mile, stands partly in the parishes of Slapton, Eddlesborough, Ivinghoe, and Pitstone.

A mansion, called Horton Hall, formerly stood in this hamlet, and was for many years the property and residence of a family named Theed.

John Theed, Esq., who purchased this manor about A.D. 1663, is buried in Eddlesborough Church, and Margaret Theed, apparently his wife, gave the Communion Plate to Slapton Church, the Advowson of which then belonged to that family. At an early period this mansion had been the residence of John de Cheddington, who, in

1325, obtained a license to build "an Oratory at his house at Horton."* The ancient mansion, which was enclosed by a moat, was pulled down in 1835, and a farm-house built on its site. The moat is still perfect, and filled with water, but the swing-bridge was removed when the old Manor-house was destroyed, and one of brick substituted. Just without the moat is a plot of ground, nearly an acre in extent, which still bears the name of "the Chapel-yard." It is plainly defined by a surrounding ridge or bank, probably the remains of its ancient fence, but the whole area within is higher than the ground without, and clearly suggests that it has been thus raised by the interment of generations. One end of this plot joins the public road, and is more raised than the rest. Here, probably, the Chapel stood, and the unevenness in the ground may be caused by remains of its foundation.

Whatever may have been the original object of the Oratory founded by John de Cheddington, an examination of this spot, in connection with its name, can scarcely fail to produce the conviction that here has been a House of Prayer and a burial ground, not alone for the use of the adjacent Manor-house, but likewise for the surrounding hamlet.

And such a House of Prayer is still needed. This hamlet contains nearly two hundred inhabitants, and is far distant from the several Churches to which it belongs. But while it has been duly provided with a public-house, its ancient House of Prayer has been totally annihilated and no other raised in its stead. The "Chapel-yard" is partly used as a rick-yard and partly as a croft for the farmer's pigs and cattle. When I visited the hamlet in A.D. 1852, the farm-house was occupied by a Mr. Woodman, who had lived in Horton from infancy, and, though upwards of seventy years old, had never seen any appearance of the ancient Chapel, nor known any one who had.

A few years since, however, as I was informed by the Rev. Bryant Burgess, while Curate of Slapton, on pulling down some old houses in Horton several pieces of dressed Tottenhoe stone, apparently of Norman and later work, were discovered. They had the appearance of having

* Lipscomb, vol. III, p. 312.

belonged to an Ecclesiastical edifice, and were probably abstracted from the demolished Chapel.

14. GREAT HORWOOD.—At Singleborough, a hamlet of this parish, there has been a Chapel, as is evident from the following notice in the Lincoln Registers:—"Bishop Fleming granted 15 Dec. 1420, to John Horwood and Margaret his wife a license to celebrate Mass in their Chapel at Synkelburgh."* There are no notices in the parish Registers of the existence of this Chapel, but in a field at Singleborough there are evident vestiges of some ancient building and inclosure. There are two shallow trenches, about forty yards apart, running parallel for eighty paces, and intersected by a similar trench near the middle. Under the turf also are the remains of foundations near this spot. This may have been the site of the Chapel alluded to in the Lincoln Registers, but no record or traditionary evidence has been found for assigning it to this spot.

The hamlet of Singleborough is about a mile from the Parish Church, and the population under thirty, but at the beginning of the last century it must have been considerably more, as there were then twenty families residing here.

* Lipscomb.