

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, STOKE MANDEVILLE.

THE letter of Mr. Charles Strachey on the condition of the Church of St. Mary, Stoke Mandeville, an extract from which appeared in the last number of the RECORDS, induced me to visit the church and to make a report on its state to the Society of Antiquaries, as one of the local secretaries. The report resulted in the passing of a resolution by the Society and communicated to the Archdeacon of Buckingham, of which the following is a copy: "The neglected state of the ancient parish church of St. Mary, Stoke Mandeville, Bucks, having been brought to the knowledge of the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Society desires to suggest that as the building is of considerable archæological interest it should at all times when not in use be locked up and thus secured from intruders, that it should have its windows mended and glazed, if this has not been already done, and that it should be kept in repair and put to some suitable use."

This resolution will be greatly appreciated by all antiquarians interested in Buckinghamshire, who will feel their indebtedness to the Society of Antiquaries for their so opportune and necessary intervention.

In reference to the disuse of the old parish church of Stoke Mandeville two remarks should here be made, the one that the present authorities cannot be responsible for what was done in the time of their predecessors, the other that that which archæologists are now seeking to secure is the preservation of a venerable building still intact, still capable of again being used for the sacred purposes for which it was erected. It will be seen that the attention given to the condition of this church may have the effect of preserving it from a similar ruined state to that of the neighbouring chapel of Quarrendon, a daughter chapel, like St. Mary's of Stoke Mandeville, to the church of Bierton.

The Archdeacon of Buckingham, it should be known, would gladly co-operate with a small committee interested



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in the preservation of the church to carry out the suggestions of the resolution, and it will be for our local Society to consider whether some practical scheme could be originated, to be worked in concert with the Archdeacon, to accomplish the desired object.

I here introduce some excellent illustrations of the church, taken from photographs by Mr. S. G. Payne of Aylesbury. I have given a short description of its architectural features in my report to the Society of Antiquaries, and which will appear in the Proceedings of the Society. The illustrations are, the exterior of the church, from the south side; the chancel, looking west; the nave and south aisle, looking east. It should be explained that the interior of the church and chancel was taken as it was seen by Mr. Strachey before the recent attempt made to bring about some appearance of order.

Mr. Strachey's letter was primarily written to call attention to the perilous condition of the Brudenell Monument, then left unprotected in the interior of the old church. This monument has been removed to the new church at Stoke Mandeville, at the cost of the Marquess of Ailesbury, and it is a subject for congratulation that it is now safe from the thoughtless destruction of holiday crowds. An illustration of the monument in the old church, and as it appears, after careful restoration, in the new church, is also given with the illustrations of the church.

On a brass plate affixed to the back of the recess above the recumbent figure is the following inscription :

Cruell death by mortall blades
 Hath slaine foure of my tender babes
 Wherof Mary Thomas and Dorothye
 Within this place ther bodies lye
 But God which never man deceaved
 Hath ther soules to Him receaved
 This death to them is greatest gayne
 Increasinge ther joy freeing them from payne
 O Dorothye my blessed Childe
 Which lovingly lyved and dyed mylde
 Thou wert my tenth even God's owne choyce
 In the exceedingly I did rejoyce
 On Good Friday at night my Doll depected
 Adew my sweete and most true harted
 My body with thine I desyre should lye
 When God hath appointed me to dye

Hoping through Christ he will provide
 For my soule wth thye in heaven to abyde
 And I your Father Edmund Brudenell
 Untill the Resurrection with thee will dwell
 And so adewe my sweete Lambes three
 Untill in Heaven I shall you see
 Such is my hope of Richard my Sonn.

In examining into the history of St. Mary's, Stoke Mandeville, I have referred to Domesday, and I find a confirmation of the fact already known that this church was originally connected with the church of Aylesbury. It is worthy of observation that Aylesbury and Buckingham were the only churches at the time of the survey that held estates in Buckinghamshire, and Aylesbury was of much greater importance than Buckingham. Aylesbury was evidently a parish of large extent, and embraced several districts which were subsequently formed into parishes, amongst which was Bierton, itself, as time went on, becoming the mother church of Stoke and the other chapelries of Quarrendon, Broughton, and Buckland. Aylesbury, it should be remembered, was one of the four British towns that held out against the Saxon invaders, and there is reason to conclude that its church was of very early date, and that the site of this church was dedicated to religious purposes from remote times. Bosworth, in his Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, interprets the word *Æyles-burh*, or *Egelesburh*, as referring to Aylesbury; and it would seem that in "*Egles*" the town preserved its Celtic name, *Eglwys*—the town with a church. That the town was important as an ecclesiastical centre is evident, for Leland writes of Aylesbury as having one parish church, "but that is most ancientest in all these quarters, as it appeareth by the Life of S. Osith. Querendon, a mile and a halfe from Alesbury, also Bierton and Alesbury (qy. Ellesburrowe) in Chilterne, 3 miles of by South with divers other Hamletts were in Alesbury parish;" and Browne Willis writes: "The church of Ailesbury was one of the most ancient of all these parts, and the parish thereto belonging of the greatest extent in the whole County.*"

I make the following quotation from Domesday, as it

* "*Notitia Parliamentaria*," published by R. Gosling, 1730.

refers to Stoke and its connection with Aylesbury, and I do not find that the recognized county history by Lipscomb makes any allusion to this extract from the Survey. "Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln, holds Stoke. It "is rated for 8 hides. Arable land for 21 ploughs. In the "demesne 3 hides and 6 ploughlands there. 20 villeins "with 4 bordars have 15 ploughlands. 4 serfs and 1 mill "of 10 shillings. Woodland for 30 pigs. Meadow for "3 ploughs. This Manor belongs to the church of "Aylesbury. There are 18 bordars who pay 20 shillings "a year. In all values it is worth 20 pounds; when "received 12 pounds; in King Edward's time 18 pounds. "Bishop Walwi held this Manor with the church in King "Edward's time. Every freeholder of the 8 hundreds "which lie around Aylesbury, who holds 1 hide or more, "yields a certain quantity of corn to this church. And "formerly by every freeholder one acre's produce of "corn or else 4 pence, were paid to this church, in the "time of King Edward, but since the coming of King "William this has not been paid."*

This offering "of corn, or one year's produce of corn or else 4 pence paid to the church" by every freeholder, in the time of the Confessor, of the eight hundreds around Aylesbury confirms the evidence of Leland and Browne Willis bearing on the importance of the church, and the yielding of these dues is a point of considerable interest. I conclude that these dues were known as "church shot" or "church scot." In the seventh and eighth centuries

* Terra Episcopi Lincolniensis. In Elesberie Hundreds. Remigius episcopus Lincolniæ tenet Stockes. Pro viii. hidis se defendit. Terra est xxi. carucarum. In dominio iii. hidæ, et ibi sunt vi. carucatæ. Ibi xx. villani, cum iv. bordariis habent xv. carucatas. Ibi iii. servi, et unus molinus de x. solidis. Silva xxx. porcorum. Pratum iii. carucarum. Hoc manerium jacet ad ecclesiam de Elesberie. Ibi xviii. bordarii qui reddunt per annum xx. solidos. In totis valenciis valet xx. libras, quando receptum xii. libras tempore Regis Edwardi xviii. libras. Hoc manerium cum ecclesia tenuit Walwi episcopus tempore Regis Edwardi. De viii. hundredis qui jacent in circuitu Elesberie, unus quisque sochus qui habet unam hidam aut plus reddit unam sumam annonæ huic ecclesiæ. Adhuc etiam de uno quoque socto una acra annonæ, aut iii. denarii solvebantur huic ecclesiæ, tempore Regis Edwardi; sed post adventum Regis Willelmi redditum non fuit.



INTERIOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, STOKE MANDEVILLE---FROM EAST END OF CHANCEL.

the English clergy had been supported by the produce of the lands which had been given to the church by kings and other great men, by a church scot or tax of one Saxon penny on every house that was worth thirty Saxon pence of yearly rent, and by the voluntary oblations of the people.* By the laws of Ina, the earliest known enactment for supplying the needs of public worship, the voluntary offerings were commuted for a regular assessment. Every dwelling was to be valued at Christmas, and the rate so imposed was called "church shot," and was payable on the following Martinmas. Money being scarce, the payment was made in produce, usually in corn or seed, but sometimes in poultry. Defaulters were to be fined 40 shillings and to pay the church shot twelve fold. These dues, Soames says in his "History of the Anglo-Saxon Church," seem to be the origin of church rates in modern times. Church shot was considered analogous to the Levitical first-fruits, and it makes repeated appearances among the Anglo-Saxon legislative acts.† This payment is known by another name in "Les termes de la Ley."‡ It is there called Church *esset* on the authority of Fleta (i. XLVII.), and the word is understood to signify a certain measure of wheat, which in times past every man on S. Martin's day gave to Holy Church as well in the time of the Britons as of the English. This contribution is also called "church seed"—as one would say, "church seed."|| Sir Edward Coke§ also writes of these gifts of devotion as being called church *esset* or church seed *quasi semen ecclesie*.

In the thirteenth century church scot was both in its institution and in its name traditionary, and this will account for the corruptions found in documents of that period and in the works of legal authorities of the seventeenth century. It would seem that Soames was in error in describing these dues as of a similar character to church rates, and that Bishop Stubbs' (Constitutional

* See "The Law Dictionary," 3rd Edition, by T. E. Tomlins. Tithes I.

† See Soames' "Anglo-Saxon Church," 4th Edition, p. 86.

‡ "Les termes de la Ley" (1667), p. 131.

|| *Ibid.*

§ See Coke on Littleton, 94.

History I. viii. 229) definition "a sort of commutation for first fruits paid by every householder" is that which should be accepted.* The primary object, too, of the payment or offering would, it would appear, be for the support of the Clergy. In the parish payment of "scot and lot" the term we are considering has survived to times almost within our own memory. By the payment of scot and bearing lot a qualification was given by an act of George II. to vote for Aldermen and Councillors of the City of London.†

Tithes, however, were paid in England at a very early period, notwithstanding the contribution of church shot; and I briefly refer to the early origin of tithes in this country because it would appear that the offering of church scot or church shot was distinct in its origin from the offering of tithes, and because it might be inferred that the offering of church shot preceded that of tithes. There is a curious "common tale" referred to and so styled by Selden, in which a complaint was made to Augustine in visiting "Cometon in Oxfordshire" (this would probably be Compton-Parva in Berkshire, or one of the Comptons in Warwickshire) by the priest of the place that the Lord of the Manor, in spite of repeated admonitions, would pay him no tithes. Augustine excommunicated the Lord, and whilst saying Mass a dead corpse buried at the door of the church suddenly arose. The story goes on to say that Augustine questioned the dead corpse in the Churchyard who he was, who tells him that in British times he was *hujus villi patronus*, that he too had refused to pay tithes and was excommunicated and died. The Priest who pronounced the excommunication then rises and tells a sad story of the other dead. However, Augustine finds that the sinner had suffered long years; he absolves him and sends him to his grave, where he fell again into dust and ashes. Selden adds as to the risen Priest, who tells of his having lain in his grave 170 years, that Augustine would gladly have him continue on earth again for the instruction of souls, but could not entreat him to remain, so he also returned "to his former lodging." The legend

* See Murray's Dictionary. "Church Shot."

† 2 George II., c. 18, sec. 7.



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ends with the absolute penitence of the Lord of the Manor, as may be concluded from the circumstances narrated.*

Sir Henry Spelman, in his larger work on Tithes, speaks of their being levied in very early times in this country. He mentions that Eadward the Elder and the Saxon and Danish Kings punished the non-payment of tithes by their temporal constitution. I do not follow out his learned remarks on the origin of tithes in this country, but will merely mention that he refers to King Eadgar, who, in a great parliament about the year 959, confirmed the payment of tithes, and assigned certain times in which they should be paid which he sets out.†

It seemed to me that the offerings to the Church of Aylesbury in connection with Stoke, and referred to in Domesday, deserve special attention.

The Church of St. Mary, at Stoke Mandeville, is situate only half a mile from the centre of the village. It can scarcely be realized that the parishioners deemed this distance a sufficient justification for abandoning their church, and that to perform their devotions it was necessary that a brand-new church should be built in the middle of the village, so that the villagers might step into it, without inconvenience, from their various homesteads and cottages. The old church stands apart in the rich pasture land of the Vale of Aylesbury, and one might have thought that a convenient path could have been made to it through the picturesque meadows. It should be observed, too, that the parish in its entirety should be considered, as it is of remarkable length, stretching above the vale far among the hills and woodlands of the Chilterns. The church is very near to the site of the Manor House, now a modern building known as Stoke House. Very probably, therefore, it was built by the Lord of the Manor for his tenants.

An interesting ecclesiastical question arises as to the position of Stoke Mandeville, and the other dependent chapels, to the church of Bierton. It appears clear that St. Mary's was a parochial chapel, since it possessed a font, which has been removed to the new church. The font

* Selden's "History of Tithes," cap. 10, p. 272 *et seq.*

† Spelman's "English Works" (1723), p. 128.



THE BRUDENELL MONUMENT,
IN THE NEW CHURCH OF STOKE MANDEVILLE.



THE BRUDENELL MONUMENT,
WHEN IN THE OLD CHURCH OF STOKE MANDEVILLE

is described by Lipscomb* as "of octagon shape on a pedestal of the same form, decorated with trefoiled arches. On the panels round the basin are carvings in relief of a shield, vine leaves, an ancient casket or charity box, four leaves conjoined by their four stalks in the centre, a rose, a shield with a device, viz. : in the fess point a roundel, two roundels at the superior angles and another at the point in base mutually conjoined by labels passing from each to the other, four leaves with a rose in the centre between them within a quatrefoil enclosed by a circle."

Sir Edward Coke says, "When the question was whether the sacred building was *ecclesia aut capella pertinens ad matricem ecclesiam*, the issue was whether it had *baptiserium et sepulturam*, for if it had the administration of Sacraments and sepulture it was in law judged a church,"† and Sir Robert Phillimore in his "Ecclesiastical Law" thus writes: "Hence at the first erection of these chapels, while they were designed to continue in subjection to the mother church, express care was taken at the ordination of them that there should be no allowance of font or bells or anything that might be to the prejudice of the old church;" and again, "the performance of baptisms, marryings, and burials in chapels existing from time immemorial might possibly be presumptive evidence of consecration and of a composition, *aliter* as to a chapel the origin of which is ascertained."‡ We may, therefore, conclude that the Church of St. Mary was immemorially a parochial chapel for Stoke Mandeville, dependent on the mother church of St. James Bierton; but whether there was a chapel here when the whole of the district was dependent on the superior church of Aylesbury I am not prepared to say, though St. Mary's was of Norman foundation.

I will make a short reference to the name of the village. Stoke would, of course, represent the area or

* "History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham," vol. ii., p. 449.

† See second part of "The Institutes," by Sir Edward Coke, p. 363.

‡ See "The Ecclesiastical Law of the Church of England," by Sir Robert Phillimore, pp. 1825, 1826.

not enclosed, but I am unable to account for the additional name of Mandeville. The name of Stoke *Mandewyl* occurs as early as 1276. A fine of messuages, lands and rents having been granted by William Gene of Stoke, Clerk, and Master Richard Gene, of the same, for life (Rot: fin: V. Edward I.).

I find that the Manor of Quarrenden was at the time of the Norman survey in the hands of Geoffrey de Mandeville, and it is possible that the Manor of Stoke may have been at one time in that family. Lipscomb, in his *History of Buckinghamshire*, expresses the difficulty of giving any continuous history of Stoke Mandeville, as the accounts of the place in the national records are for the most part detached notices of its ancient possessions—very insufficient documents from which an authentic history of the manorial possessions of the place can be obtained. Stoke, however, was one of the Manors of the Bishop of Lincoln at the time of the Norman survey.

I have referred to the interesting Brudenell monument in the Church of Stoke Maudeville, which has been happily rescued by mere accident, through the attention called to its condition by a comparative stranger to the county, but for many years it has been known that the monuments to the Lee family in the desecrated chapel of Quarrenden, another of the daughter chapels to Rierton, present, as Britten says in his "*Beauties of England and Wales*," "a sad picture of neglect and dilapidation." Lipscomb gives an account in 1817 of the chapel "as affording a melancholy object of contemplation, not merely from its dilapidated condition, but from the mutilation of the monuments of the ancient proprietors of the contiguous estate."* Of these monuments that adorned the chapel, is one to Sir Henry Lee, Knight of the Garter, a conspicuous figure in the court of Queen Elizabeth, famous for his valour and gallantry, and on its walls is, or was till recently, a tablet which preserves an account of the merits and renown of this Knight.

JOHN PARKER.

* Lipscomb. "*History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*," vol. ii., p. 407.