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NOTES ON SOME MOORLAND CHURCHES.

PART II.

LECTURE BY

MR. R. HANSFORD WORTH, C.E.

(Read 5th December, 1895.)

[Reprinted from the Transactions of the Plymouth Institution and Devon and Cornwall Natural History Society.—1895-96.]

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Bridestowe.—The parish church is dedicated to St. Bridget. It consists of tower, nave of three bays, north and south aisles, chancel, and south porch. In style it is of the Decorated and Perpendicular periods. It has been well restored, but it is to be regretted that the old dressings should have been almost entirely removed.

The tower has been heightened as late as 1828, and exhibits no peculiar features beyond the absence of buttresses, and the batter of the sides for some eight feet above the ground level. It is now plastered, although originally the stone was left uncovered. The quoins are in dressed granite, as may be seen where the plaster has fallen off.

In the lower story of the tower, on the south side, are a doorway and window immediately above the same; these have now been built up. The tower arch, on the inside, is of rude segmental construction, and is evidently later than the tower itself (unless, indeed, the tower is later than the church). Some six or seven feet below the springing of the present arch, and some seven or eight feet above the floor level, may be seen the springing of the original tower arch, and portions of six of the original arch stones are left on either side. The original arch was probably pointed, and was removed in order to give a better view of the west window.

The porch has stone seats along either side, as is common and usual. The door of the porch is sunk in a rectangular recess, and has no hood mould. The doorway itself is arched; the mouldings are shallow, and in no way distinctive, the spandrels being filled by quatrefoil and trefoil figures of very slight relief.

The gable of the porch has been altered, and considerably injured in appearance. On either side the wall of the porch is capped by a bold cove, which forms a cornice. This cove, or eaves course, is a feature of both aisles also, but is much less

distinctive in character in the northern, and does not appear in the chancel. The buttresses of the south aisle dip into, and are stopped by, the eaves course; on the north, however, they are a stage less in height.

The east window, of three lights, is in the Perpendicular style, and retains the original tracery. A window in the south wall of the chancel, restored, is also of Perpendicular date; all other tracery is Decorated.

The chancel arch has been badly interfered with, the whole projection of its piers beyond the side walls of the chancel having been cut away. The capitals are too mutilated to admit of detail being recognized. The arch itself is probably of the Decorated period.

There is a hagioscope in the south aisle, for which glass has been inserted in the new oak panelling of the chancel. There is a rood stairway in the north wall of the chancel. The lower door is now almost hidden by the oak panelling; its head is roughly four-centred.

Two sedilia, and a piscina of Decorated date, are to be found in the south wall of the chancel; whilst on the north wall is a mural tablet to the memory of Lady Honor Calmady, who departed this life 17th December, 1663.

The inscription runs:

“Eight fruitful branches still are springing fount,
Though here the roote lyes dead within this ground.
Two Husbands in their tombes divided lie
Who both did in the bed of Honor die.
But here the King of Terrors (oh, uniust)
At last hath layd their Honor in the dust
Till that which here is in dishonor sow'ne
Be rays'd in Honor to a glorious Throne.”

The piers and pier arches are uninteresting. The arches are four-centred, and have no mouldings. Piers are of the usual Devonshire type, somewhat heavy, however; and the capitals are octagonal and comparatively modern.

The original granite bases remain, and, never very boldly moulded, have lost from age whatever grace of form they had. The lower part of the base, or plinth, has been octagonal. The capitals of the responds, or half piers at the tower, are original, and show the rude style in which all the capitals were probably wrought.

The font is a plain octagonal one, of moorstone, and has been redressed and generally wrought into as near semblance of a new article as might be.

Fragments of an old wooden screen have been re-erected under the chancel arch as a rail, and are thus preserved.

In the churchyard are a number of granite tombs of the cromlech pattern; a survival probably never suspected as such by those who erected these monuments.

Leading to the south porch is an avenue of trees, and at the entrance to the avenue a dressed stone gateway, with semicircular arch and ornamentation of a Norman character.

The trees in the avenue exhibit that marked tendency to sprout as coppice from the roots around the base of the trunk, which is not uncommon in trees growing in churchyards. It has been suggested to me that this arises from the constant interference with the roots consequent on grave-digging.

In the church, by the tower, the old parish stocks are still preserved. Accommodation was provided for three persons. The stocks are of ordinary pattern, with no especial peculiarities.

Lydford.—The parish church is dedicated to St. Petroc. It consists, at present, of tower, nave, north and south aisles, and chancel, with south porch.

The north aisle is a recent addition, and is a singularly happy instance of the healthier modes of addition and restoration; so far from being in any way incongruous, it adds well to the general effect, and harmonises with the whole.

The tower is of Perpendicular date, and the piers of the tower arch are enriched with panels, having foliated heads.

The nave is of three bays, the pier arches being four-centred, and resting on piers of the usual Devonshire Perpendicular pattern, rather more deeply and boldly moulded than the average. The capitals are very simple, but not ineffective, and the bases have an octagonal plinth, the capitals having an octagonal abacus.

The rood stairs are on the south side of the chancel arch, starting from the south aisle, and ending immediately in the spandrel of the chancel and pier arches. The chancel arch is simple, and the projecting member of its piers into the chancel has been trimmed away; but this does not constitute a serious disfigurement.

The squint lies in a curious manner by the side of the rood stairs.

There is a piscina, possibly of Early English date, probably coeval with the aisle, in the south aisle, and another in the chancel, of Early English or Decorated date.

The font is of plain Early English, Norman, or earlier type, and evidently belonged to the older church, probably to the Early English building, dedicated in 1261.

The east window of those days has been restored.

Some of the woodwork in the roof is original.

The porch is said to be Early English, but belongs to a later period. The style of its masonry corresponds with that in the wall of the south aisle. The mould of the door architrave is simple and shallow. Within the porch is a stoup, and a fragment of stone, with a raised cross, which may form part of an old coffin cover, or gravestone.

Some old work is left in the west gable of the south aisle, being the older gable of this aisle before it was widened in Perpendicular times. The work is apparently Early English, and a fragment of a window dressing, still left, confirms this opinion.

It is two-tier work; that is to say, the lower portion of the wall is thicker than the upper, and the junction between the two is effected by an outside table or course.

On the north face of the tower is a quaint old gargoyle in carved granite, representing some strange beast, species undiscoverable, in a position of the utmost discomfort.

In the windows much of the original tracery is left; in one, at least, to the east of the porch, no addition or restoration has taken place.

The west door in the tower is in Perpendicular style, with square label or hood mould. The arch itself is four-centred.

The mouldings of architrave are fairly bold; and a somewhat unusual ornament, consisting of two lance-shaped leaves with a connecting stem, is used to fill the spandrels.

There is a touching incident in connection with the photograph I have shown of the font in Lydford church.

I should premise that the parish clerk is firmly imbued with the idea that eleven centuries—and apparently eleven centuries exactly—have passed since the font in question left the maker's hand.

Personally, I incline to agree with him in attributing to it a most considerable antiquity.

While I was photographing the font, a young man and his wife entered the church. The young man had been to America, and had recently returned. Leaning over the object of my photographic interest, he drew his wife to him, and remarked that at this font was he christened long years ago. Said he: "The years pass by and are gone. We do not count them till one day their sum amazes," and the parish clerk made response: "Eleven hundred years—eleven centuries—few think it; but it is so." The young woman looked surprised, and even startled; but as she left the church I thought I could detect in her eyes a true American reverence for the antique; that husband of hers, who betters Methuselah by a century, will receive respectful adoration.

I do not vouch for the strict verbal accuracy of my report of this incident; I was wondering how long the young couple meant to enthuse over the irresponsive font, and whether I might regard my photograph as wholly spoilt, and attention to these matters somewhat diverted my thoughts.

Now the parish clerk referred to has occupied office some forty odd years, and his father preceded him in the service of the church. He can tell strange tales of the services in the old days, when the singing gallery stood at the west end of the nave, by the tower, and the choir were reinforced by performers on the hautboy, the ophicleide, the viol and bass-viol, with other instruments. The picture lingers in his memory of the old gentleman who used to play the bass-viol: he describes with appreciative recollection the manner of the old man when he played a peculiarly deep note. The unction with which he handled the bow, the solemn lengthening of his face, the closed eyes and downcast head, and then the sudden straightening up, and the air of relief when the note had been accomplished.

He recalls also the days of the old high pews, terrible incentives to misbehaviour, where mischief could be kept well out of view, and youth might revel in forbidden ways. Capital pews for slumberous souls also—where sleep might be indulged in without scandal to the congregation, unless indeed it found voice in rhythmic snore. There were noted sinners in this latter respect, such as one old gentleman who, at the first word of the text, leaned prayerfully forward and rested his forehead against

the reading-shelf, invariably giving his first snore before the text had been completed. He was an institution, and as such not to be disturbed.

In lesser people, however, an avenging providence was provided in the shape of the sexton, father to my informant.

This official counted among his duties the maintenance of seemly behaviour among the congregation; and the son chuckles with satisfaction at this day, as he recalls the pained surprise exhibited by those whose heads were soundly rapped by the long rod of office, either by way of enforcement of seemly behaviour or arousing wakeful attention.

During a severe gale, many years ago, one of the pinnacles of the tower came crashing through the roof, and partly ruined the singers' gallery. The wife of the old sexton was leaving the church at the time, and the wreckage fell just clear of her. I believe that no one else was in the church.

Lydford is essentially *the* church of the moor; it can claim the highest rank among the moorland churches, not only on the score of its parish, which includes the whole forest, and 59,995 acres, but also on account of the undoubted antiquity of its foundation.

Dedicated to the British Saint Petroc, there is no reasonable doubt that, unlike many churches dedicated to this saint, it can claim to be of British foundation. The Saxon Conquest of Devon found it in existence; the Norman Conquest of England found it; and there, through varying fortunes of its church, and of its building, it has remained to our day.

The font may belong to almost any period; its extreme simplicity conveys an impression of antiquity which is, I think, justified. In removing the north wall to erect the new aisle, masonry of an early type was destroyed; but there yet remains the masonry in the west gable of the south aisle, and this is Early English, and earlier. None of the original building can be presumed to remain; but portions of later date yet standing are, in themselves, sufficient to constitute a claim to venerable age.

A few dates may possibly convey a far better impression than the generalities in which I have hitherto indulged. St. Petroc, to whom the church is dedicated, died at Bodmin in the year 564 A.D.

The Saxons reached Lydford about the year 962, and a church was then in existence, presumably on the present site. The

Danes, in their turn, visited Lydford in the year 997; and, although no record of the fact remains, it has been held probable that the then existing building was either wholly or partially destroyed by them.

The church appears in documentary history as the church of St. Petroc at Lydford, in the year 1237, July 12th. Henry III. then granted it the tithe of the herbage of Dartmoor, and from that date to the present the continuous list of rectors exists.

Bishop Bronescombe, in 1261, dedicated the new church, then erected on this site, on August 3rd; the new church at Lew Trenchard having been dedicated the previous day.

There seems reason to believe that the tower and south aisle were added between the years 1424 and 1487.

The altar, now removed, at the end of the south aisle, was dedicated to the Virgin. As remarked previously, the piscina attached to this altar yet remains.

The plain square castle that stands close by the church occupies the site of earlier and more primitive fortifications, and the history of its origin and growth doubtless kept step by step with that of the sacred building beside it. The scene of the dispensation of Lydford Law, it has been the subject of constant reference in guide and topographical works.

The Church of St. Mary, at Mary Tavy, consists of a nave of four bays, with south aisle and south porch; the vestry, adjoining porch, is a recent addition. The church and tower are uniform in style, and the whole building, which was built in the reign of Henry VII., is a good example of Devonshire Perpendicular. I am much indebted to the Rev. I. Kempt Anderson for kindly accompanying me to the building and indicating the chief details.

The piers are of the usual form, those detached being of granite, and those engaged with walls, as at the tower end, being in a green-grey stone. The pier arches, which are four-centred, and slightly stilted, are in the same green material, and are moulded, with the double wavy, in two suits separated by a deep hollow.

The abacus of the capital is octagonal, the bell being circular, and the mouldings few and simple.

The font is octagonal, with octagonal base and shaft, and quite devoid of ornament.

Within the church, immediately to the east of the south door, is a small stoup or piscina, exceedingly simple in form; another, little more elaborate, is to be found at the eastern end of the south aisle, with an image bracket in the jamb of the window immediately over it. It seems apparent that the eastern end of the south aisle has been, at one time, dedicated and used as a chapel.

The respond against the east wall is distinctly Norman in character, and from the identity of material it is to be presumed that the respond at the tower is the original Norman work, redressed to correspond with the rebuilding in 1420.

There is an external rood staircase, octagonal in form, which does not correspond with the adjacent masonry; this latter is in rubble, and in part constitutes possibly a portion of a much earlier building.

The tower is Perpendicular, with one buttress only—that against the south aisle. The dressings of west door and window are in Roborough Down elvan. The pinnacles terminate in octagonal spires without crockets.

Query: whether some of the smaller tracery in the lower windows of the tower has not been adapted from an earlier building.

A fine old cross stands in the churchyard. The head of the cross is recent. The old stocks are in the porch—accommodation provided for four malefactors. The porch retains its old roof, and over the church door is a dressing, either an image bracket or the dressings of a piscina.

The following is inscribed on a stone in the churchyard:

“Here lieth the body of John Hawkins Blacksmith son of Thomas Hawkins of Lanehead in this Parish who was buried Sept. 12th 1721 aged 28.

“Here buried were some years before
His two wives and five children more
One Thomas named whose fate was such
To lose his life by wrestling much
Which may a Warning be to all
How they into such pastimes fall
Elizabeth and William and
Hannah and yet Pray understand
A second named Elizabeth
All these were taken off by Death
In which prepare you Readers all
We must away when God doth call.’

The Church of St. Peter, at Peter Tavy, consists of a nave of four bays, north aisle, south chapel or transept, south porch, and tower. Its style is Perpendicular, and several small details correspond closely with those of St. Mary at Mary Tavy. For instance, the capitals of the piers are identical in moulding, and the form of the pier arches is the same, although the utmost simplicity is here observed. The inner mouldings of some windows correspond.

The window tracery is, throughout, Perpendicular, some windows having arched, and others square heads.

The arch at the south chapel is of curious form, being distinctly in the shape of a horse-shoe, and appearing most incongruous with its surroundings.

There is a priest's door in the chancel, and the remains are preserved of the painted base of the rood screen, the panels of which have representations of various saints.

The font is octagonal, with panelled faces, on which are carved, in relief, the cross keys of St. Peter and various traceries of geometrical design. The material is Roborough Down elvan. The screen across the belfry appears to have been formed from old bench ends. I do not, however, consider the antiquity of this work to be considerable. There is too modern a plan about the cocked hats and smoking caps, as well as other articles of attire, to warrant such supposition. I have been informed that this screen is erected from the remains of an old renaissance pew.

The rood staircase has been built up, and can only be observed from the outside, near the priest's door.

The masonry of the porch and tower is of apparently later date than the rest of the church.

The tower is Perpendicular, with full buttresses, battlement, and with crocketed pinnacles, terminating in small crosses, the latter an unusual and possibly later feature.

The epitaphs in the churchyard present several varieties of admonition, of the order of—

“Behold the place where now I lay
As you be now so once was I
But as I am so must you be
Therefore prepare to follow me.”

Or,

“Draw neer my freind and cast an eye
Then goe thy way prepare to dye
Read thy Doome here for know thou must
One day like mee be turned to dust
The time will come too ceertainlye
For all men liveing once to dye
Therefore in time prepared be
When Death shall come to follow me.”

There is, in fact, a singular lack of variety about the epitaphs.
Within the church :

Bodies of five daughters of Richard Eveleigh, rector of Peter Tavy. Two Maries, two Elizabeths, one Eleanor, all of whom died young.

“Under this stone by Natures fatall doome
Five sisters lie cropt in their tender bloome
They breathed awhile and lookt the world about
And like new lighted candles soone went out
Their sunne nor sooner did arise but set
Their journies end at setting forth they met
They op'd their eyes and in the worlds disdaine
Full quicklie did they close them up againe
Their life was short, the lesse they did amisse
The shorter life the longer is their blisse.”

The Chapel at Okehampton Castle can hardly be fairly described as a moorland church, but it is of sufficient interest in itself, and with its surroundings, to be here referred to. Its dedication is unknown, and there is no definite information as to date.

It lies to the south-west of, and attached to, one of the two large residential blocks of the Castle, and from its position is necessarily without an east window. Two side windows yet remain, and the tracery still left shows them to have had two lights, and to have been of early Decorated type. One jamb and a slight portion of the arch of another window remain on the western side. There is a well-preserved piscina, with trefoiled head, in the southern wall.

The internal dimensions of this chapel are 14 feet in width by about 20 feet in length; this last measurement is not strictly determinable.

The date of this chapel may approximately be stated as late thirteenth century, and there appears reason to believe that it was erected by the first Courtenay Earl, Hugh, who succeeded in 1292, on the death of Isabella de Fortibus.

The Church of St. Andrew, Whitchurch, amply repays a visit, and is, indeed, one of the most pleasing of all our moorland churches.

It consists of a nave, chancel, north aisle, south chapel, tower, and south porch. The prevailing style is Perpendicular, with remains of much older work.

The nave is of four bays, of which one (transeptal) is less in span and height than the remaining three. The piers are of light and graceful section, the hollows being more pronounced than usual. The capitals have circular bells, with octagonal work over. The bases are simple, but bolder and more effective than are usually found; while the architraves of the pier arches have two suits of brace moulding, separated by a deep hollow. A small image bracket springs from the chancel respond on the north side.

There is a fine tomb of the Mooringe family in the north wall of the chancel, dating 1620-1630:

"Neere by lie the bodys of these who names are under

1. Heere lyeth the body of
Pascharo the wife of
John Allyn gent Somme time the wife
of Richard Mooringe gent was buried y^e 5th day of May 162—
2. All so the Body of
Alce the wife of Antony
Mooringe gentleman who was buried
The viiith Day of Ianuarye 1639
3. All so the body of
Carteryd the daughter
of Anthony Mooringe
gent who was buried the
xxith Day of November 1617
4. All so the Body of Iohn
The Sonne of Anthony
Mooringe who
was buried the
ixth day of February 1620
5. All so the body of Anthony
The Sonne of Anthony
Mooringe who was
Buried the xxiiith day
of Ianuarye 1627
6. All so the body of
Marye the Daughter
of Anthony Mooringe
who was buried the
vth day of Iune 163—"

The effigies beneath are ten in number:

Lady with skull in hand; gentleman; lady with skull in hand; girl with skull in hand; woman without; girl without; two boys with skulls; girl without; girl with skull.

Above is a death's-head crowned—with an arrow or dart, an hour-glass, pick, spade, cross-bones, and a device. Coat of arms on either side; six birds—species unknown.

Dog, fox, or wolf, and crescent as crest on right, and lion's head on left.

This tomb is an appropriation.

The canopy is of much earlier date than 1630, as a merely cursory examination of the detail will show; the original effigy having gone, the canopy was appropriated by the Mooringe family.

The canopy is in Hurdwich stone: its hood mould is identical in section with that over the priest's door and the east windows. The architrave mouldings correspond with the east window. The capitals of the shafts are Norman in character, but the details at large are Decorated. The granite tomb beneath is curious; its date later than the canopy. The five-arched panels bear fleur-de-lys, six-leaved rose, five-leaved rose, fleur-de-lys, four interlaced cross-bones.

Hard by stands a monument to Francis Pengelly, Esq., Barrister, died January 1st, 1722.

In the south wall of the chancel are a priest's door of Early English date and a piscina of Norman date.

The hagioscope, or squint, from the south chapel to the chancel, assumes unusual dimensions, and is gracefully conceived. A piscina in this south chapel may be assigned to almost any period, but is probably early.

The font is of late Decorated or early Perpendicular date, probably the latter; it is of elvan, octagonal, with panelled shaft, and unusually enriched.

A portion of the old oak rood screen remains across the transept. Of Perpendicular date, much of the ornament, notably in the spandrels, retains the flowing and graceful character of the preceding period, while yet other details of ornament have assumed the more formal character of the latest Gothic. (N.B. The spandrels are new, hence possibly their incongruity; and yet the cornice, which is old, is somewhat similar in style.)

The rood staircase is in the north wall, by the transeptal arch. The staircase is external and unusual in form, replacing a buttress, and having the outline of the latter showing through it.

There is an image bracket of Perpendicular style in the wall of the north aisle.

The porch is a fine specimen of Devonshire Perpendicular, and exhibits unusual care in detail; the inside, as well as the outside, architrave of the door being moulded, and even the spandrels filled with sunk work.

The south door itself is Norman, and a piscina adjoining is late Early English or Early Decorated. Granite seats, or benches, flank the sides of the porch within.

The old waggon roof of the church remains, except in the chancel and south chapel.

The east window, of five lights, is of geometrical intersecting tracery, late Early English, or Early Decorated.

The tower is, I think, earlier than the north aisle. The low west door has an arched hood mould, and the west window is of very Early Perpendicular. The upper stages have angle buttresses.

In the main the tower is built in granite, but much of the plinth is Hurdwich stone, as well as a few stones in the south-east buttress. There are remnants of the Norman church. The staircase is exterior, in an octagonal turret.

The north aisle replaces the simple plinth by base moulds of comparatively late type; the tracery, as in the nave, is of elvan; the work in coursed granite, the blocks being of about twice the average face of those in the tower.

The masonry of the chancel is, to some extent, hidden by plaster, but to the south it is uncovered. The east wall has two low, battered or inclined buttresses, probably Norman in date; and here, again, the Hurdwich stone appears. The building here, and in the south chapel, is in rubble masonry; that in south wall of chancel recently re-erected.

The south wall of chapel is in granite of same period as tower, with occasional quoin stones of Hurdwich.

The porch is of similar style to the north aisle; but in the base some Hurdwich stone has been re-used.

The south wall of nave is in rubble masonry.

I have called the south door, and the piscina in the chancel, Norman. Rather, perhaps, I should have said Saxon; but this is a detail on which useless controversy might rage without sufficient evidence to justify a victory to either side. The south quoin of the hagioscope is another piece of old work.

A fragment of carving in west wall of north aisle represents a cherub with wings folded.

In the churchyard is the octagonal base of an old cross.

Circumstances have prevented the preparation of sketches to illustrate this paper and its predecessor; it is hoped, however, to publish their illustrations in the next volume of *Transactions*.

The second book of the history is divided into three parts, the first of which contains the history of the reformation in the cantons of the Grisons, the second of the cantons of the Appenzels, and the third of the cantons of the Aargau, Schaffhausen, and St. Gall.

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