

Kympton.

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The parish which we are now visiting is an ancient one. It appears to have derived its name from the small streamlet which rises in this valley, called the Kym, and which soon loses itself in the larger stream of the Mymram. Kympton, or Kyminton, as it is written at the time of the ecclesiastical survey, A.D. 1291, thus signifies the town on the Kym.



The Rectory of Kympton, together with the advowson, anciently belonged to the Prior and convent of *Merton*, in Surrey, by whom an ordination of a vicarage was made, during the time of Hugh Wells, who was consecrated

Bishop of Lincoln, A.D., 1209.

The ordination is given in Mr. Clutterbuck's History of Hertfordshire.

At the time of the dissolution, the rectory and the advowson of the vicarage came to the Crown, until the 35th year of the reign of Henry VIII., when the king granted them to Nicholas Bristow and his wife, and the grant was renewed to their son, Nicholas, for a term of 21 years, by Queen Elizabeth.

The Bristow family were largely favored by grants of church property at this period, at Ayot also, and elsewhere, as was shewn in the notes upon Ayot St. Lawrence in a late number of our Transactions.

Queen Elizabeth, however, in the 31st year of her reign granted the property at Kympton to Richard Branthwaite and Roger Bromley, Esqrs., to be held of the Queen as of her manor of East Greenwich, which parties afterwards sold it, and we find it in 1700 possessed by Sir Jonathan Keate, Bart., and the Keate family afterwards sold it to Mrs. Margaret Brand, from whom it has descended to the present Lay Rector and Patron of the Vicarage, Lord Dacre.

I gather these interesting particulars from Mr. Clutterbuck's History, to which I must refer you for fuller

information than time allows me now to transcribe. You will there find a very valuable list of the Vicars of this parish, dating from 1239, with the names of the Patrons by whom they were presented, and the Bishops by whom they were instituted.

The church, which is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, stands on the side of an acclivity rising on the north side of the village.

It consists of a nave having two side aisles, a chancel, with a chapel on its south side, a square embattled tower at its west end, surmounted by a short taper spire covered with lead, with staircase on north side, a south porch with a priest's chamber over, and a vestry on the north side of the chancel.

The stone used for this church is the same as most of the churches in this part of Hertfordshire, namely, the the Tottenhoe clunch, near Dunstable.

The earliest part of this church is of the early part of the 13th century, Henry III. reign.

The nave is 63ft. long and 18ft. 6in. wide, with arcades of six bays on each side, the piers are all circular, six of them have beautiful early English foliated caps, with deep shadows very much like those we saw last year at Flamstead, though somewhat earlier in date, the other eight have various forms of cushion ornament, the label termination has no flowers or head, but ends in a point, deeply undercut; the general termination of labels of this date is the head of the reigning sovereign, the Bishop of the Diocese, the founder, or other eminent persons connected with the work, and there is generally so marked a character in the features, that there can be no doubt they were at least intended for likenesses.

Over three of the bays on each of the nave there is a perpendicular clerestory window of two lights, some of their heads and mullions being of wood.

The discontinuous tower arch has some beautiful mouldings, and is evidently of the same date as the the tower which is Perpendicular.

The chancel is separated from the Hoo Chapel on its south side by three stately and well proportioned Perpendicular arches, the easternmost bay being occupied by an old piece of wooden screenwork of Perpendicular date. The organ now stands in this chapel.

In the south aisle is what remains of the old oak rood screen, which of course originally stood under the old chancel arch, its doorway has been filled up and much of it has been cut away in order that it might fit its present position.

The staircase to the rood-loft has been done away with.

The Perpendicular roof over the south aisle is rich in design, with its moulded purlins and carved head corbels, it has been horribly patched up, and is now in a bad condition, it is evidently of the same date as the tower. The present nave roof is a modern erection, and a great eyesore, I should imagine the old roof was like the south aisle roof as it must have been a very flat pitched roof, not to have cut into the east window of the tower as the present one does; another reason that makes me think so, is that marks still remain in the wall where the pendants and corbels have been. The chancel roof is like that over the nave, an ugly modern erection, it was put on in 1814.

At the east end are the remains of some frescos, in the splays of what must have been a triple lancet, being of the same date as the nave piers and arches. The frescos are in such a bad state of preservation, it is hard to find out what they represent, but I believe they are intended to be a priest and a saint.

At the east end of the Hoo Chapel is a perpendicular window, with modern additions made in brick and plastered over, which at first glance gives it the appearance of a Decorated window. All the windows on the south side of the church, except the belfry window, are modern and not reproductions.

The eight old stall ends in the chancel are of late Perpendicular date, with good poppy-heads, and some nice pieces of panel-tracery in front of the book-board, the rest is modern.

There was an old Jacobean pulpit here, but it was sold when the Rev. Frederick Sullavan was vicar, to one of the parishioners. The two old chairs which stand now in south aisle and chancel have evidently been old altar chairs.

There is only one piscina in the church, which is in the south wall of the Hoo Chapel; half of its basin has been cut away, and the other half filled in with cement. The font is modern.

The tower contains a peal of 6 bells; the largest is 10ft. in circumference; the tower has lately been in too dangerous a condition to admit of their being rung, except by clappers. The inscriptions on them are: 1 John Carpenter Church Warden 1723 John Waglett made in London 2 Thomas Hoo 1636 3 W. M.: C. W. 1636, which I think is intended to mean (William Michell Church Warden) 4 Sanctus Dunstan 5 Sit Nanen Domini Benedictum 6 William Michell 1638. *

On the floor of the Hoo chapel are the remains of two altar-tombs of grey purbeck marble, on which were formally brass effigies, and inscriptions which also ran round the verges of both stones.

On the floor of the chancel is a small brass to Christopher Fox, who was installed as Vicar, in 1698, by Bishop Gardener; he died in 1722, aged 58, Sir Jonathan Keate then being patron.

There has been much work done in this church since 1861, when the north aisle was built to provide further accommodation; Mr. Joseph Clarke was the architect, the present aisle being much larger than the old one. It has a lean-to roof; about a foot of each clearestory window had to be made blind in order that the pitch of the roof could be made sufficiently steep. I don't think that this aisle adds much to the architectural beauty of the church.

The chancel arch is also modern, erected at the same time as the north aisle, the staircase to the rood-loft being sacrificed for it.

The tower is now being restored, in the true sense of the word, all the old stone work being retained that is possible, and where it is too far decayed, exact reproductions of the old work are made in Beer Stone, which matches wonderfully in color with the Tottenhoe clunch. Mr. J. Oldrid Scott is the architect, and Mr. John Thompson, of Peterborough, is the builder. †

* Since the above was written the restoration of the tower has been completed, and the bells re-hung, so that they are now in good order for ringing.

† In addition to the complete restoration of the tower, the very interesting south porch has been carefully restored, under the same direction, since the visit of our Society at Kimpton.