

Broxbourne Church.

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The parish of Broxbourne lies in the Hundred of Hertford. The Roman way known as Ermine Street, passed through the parish, and remains have from time to time been discovered in the vicinity. The Church is dedicated to S. Augustine, and is built in the perpendicular or style of the 15th century. The materials are principally flint, with stone dressings. It was bestowed by Robert Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, and his wife, upon the Prior and Chapter of the Hospital of S. John of Jerusalem during the reign of Richard I.; and was afterwards conveyed by the Hospitallers to the See of London; the Bishops of London continued as proprietors of the Rectory and of the advowson of the Vicarage until the year 1852, when it was transferred to the See of Rochester. In 1864 the Bishop of Rochester granted the advowson of this Vicarage and of Hoddesdon to Horace James Smith, Esq., in exchange for three other preferments.

The parochial register dates only from the year 1688; it appears that one of the Vicars committed the registers to the care of his clerk, who cut them up for the sake of the parchment.

The Church consists of a nave with north and south aisles, a square embattled tower at the west end, and porch in the south side, and chapel and priest's chambers on the north side. The nave is divided from the aisles by six arches on either side. The hood mouldings of these arches terminate with figures, each holding a shield. I cannot attach much importance to the genuineness of the arms on the shields, for the heraldry is open to great suspicion from the fact that the shield above the most western pier on the south side bears the arms of Monson, whose tablet on the wall bears the date of 1726—1684 being the earliest date I find this family mentioned in the Church. It may be accounted for from the fact that the Church underwent extensive repairs about thirty years ago, and I am afraid it was at this time that the terminals and arms were placed in their present false position. It will be seen that the bell of the central pier cap on the south side has never apparently been completed, the projections being, I presume, left for future carving. A similar

instance of this occurs at Hitchin Church. The fact that only this one capital should have been intended to be carved suggests that possibly the Church originally had a Galilee of which this pier may have marked the termination. Perhaps I may be allowed to explain for the benefit of those who do not understand the term, that Galilee, strictly speaking, means a porch, but for want of a better term it is usually applied to that portion of the Church which was occupied by the women. The nave and aisles have an open oak roof, the chancel and eastern ends of the aisles are ceiled on a level with the wall plate, with an oaken ceiling divided into square compartments with heavy oak ribs and carved oak roses at the intersections; it may have been originally intended to ceil the whole of the nave and aisle in a similar manner. The other original oak still remaining is the south door, door to priest's chambers, trap door to upper room in priest's chambers, and an extremely handsome oak coffer.

Certainly the most interesting relics of this Church are the monuments to the Says, the Purbeck Marble Altar Tomb, on south side of the chancel, of Sir John Say, Knight, and that on the north to Sir William Say, son of Sir John Say. The alabaster monument to Sir Henry Cock is also quite worthy of attention. Sir William Say was a great benefactor to the Church, having built the chapel and priest's chambers on the north side of the chancel, he also left certain monies for masses for the repose of the souls of his father, mother, two wives, his own, and others; he also gave vestments and silver and gilt vessels. It was the priest whose duty it was to minister to the offices of the chapel, who occupied these chambers. The east window of the chancel contains two shields with the coats of arms of Say, impaling alliances, amongst which are the arms of Boucher and Blount; it appears that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners about nine years ago undertook the re-glazing of this window. Each shield has been reversed, they should of course show the Say arms on the dexter side instead of the sinister, these mistakes are of frequent occurrence in churches and liable to be very misleading. The church was once rich in ornamental brasses, and though many have been lost or stolen, those that remain are important. It is a matter of great regret to notice so many dispoiled slabs,

and to think that Oliver Cromwell and the puritans cannot be charged with the spoliation of all of them, but that we must accuse some much more modern iconoclasts for the havoc made with the monumental brasses of Broxbourne Church.

Sir John Say, Knight, whose altar tomb is beneath the arch between the chancel and south aisle, was a supporter of the Lancastrian party; he afterwards went over to the winning side, as is evidenced from the fact that he wears the Yorkist's collar of suns and roses. First in importance amongst the brasses is that to Sir John Say and Dame Elizabeth, his wife, 1473, one of the most interesting brasses in all England, for it is one of the few in which the original enamelling is preserved. The red enamel in the achievement of arms on the tabard of the knight and on the mantle of the lady, is almost as brilliant as on the day when it was first done; and on the crest and helmet of the achievement are distinct remains of gilding. The engraving of the brass also is of the finest quality, and altogether it is an almost unique specimen, from which we are able to form some idea of the splendour of these memorials in their original condition. The effigy of the knight is unfortunately headless, but his lady's effigy is almost intact. She wears the well-known "butterfly head-dress" of the period, a waving floating structure of gauze and wire. Underneath is the richly embroidered and jewelled cap. She wears the sideless surcoat, and her mantle is emblazoned with the arms of her family. I commend the figure of Dame Elizabeth to the minute inspection of the ladies of the party. On the shield on the upper dexter side of the slab are the arms of Say, the shield of arms on the sinister side, I regret to say, has disappeared recently, as it is mentioned as being existant by Messrs. Clutterbuck, Cussans, and W. F. Andrews. On the tomb of Purleck Marble, the colours still remaining, are—on the north and south sides, three shields—1st, Say, 2nd, Say impaling Cheyney, 3rd, Say; and at the west end, arms of Say, and Say impaling Cheyney. The marginal inscription is mutilated: it reads: "Here lyeth Dame Elizabeth somtyme wyf to [Sir John Say Knight, daughter of Lawrence Cheyney Esq] wyer of Cambridgeshire a woman of noble blode and most noble in gode manners which decessed the xxv day of September the yere of our Lord A.

M^dCCCCLXXIII and entered in this Church of Brokesborn abydyng the body of her said husband whose soules God bryng to ever [lasting life.] (The bracketed portions are supplied by Weever).

At the east end of the Bosanquet Chapel is the alabaster tomb of Sir Henry Cock and Ursula, his wife; Sir Henry Cock was knighted in 1589, was sheriff for the county in 1575, and was afterwards appointed cofferer to the Queen, and in 1603 entertained King James I. at Broxbourne; he died in 1609, his wife dying two years later. The tomb is an elaborate piece of workmanship, in the style which so distinctly marks the period. The effigies are on two shelves, the knight lying on the upper shelf in highly ornamented armour, with his head on his right hand which is resting on his helmet. The wife lies on the lower shelf; the upper portion of the tomb being formed by a recessed semi-circular arch.

In the south aisle is a tablet to MacAdam, the celebrated road maker; it was placed here by his wife, who, after his death, resided in this neighbourhood. Each stave of the oak door to the porch is splayed on the outer side, and the door is divided into heavy square compartments of about six inches across, on the inside it is of the original work, the original ring and plate also still remain. On the inside of the porch are two interesting and appropriate inscriptions; the shield over the entrance appears to be of the 15th century, and in all probability of the same date as the Church; on the east side of the 15th century south door is a very charming stoup of the same period, and a similar one still remains on the inside of the doorway. The octagonal font is of Purbeck marble, and may probably have belonged to the older Church; on each face are two arched panels; the only mouldings which occur are in the bases to the eight small shafts around one large central one, and I should say that it may probably date from the 13th century, the mouldings being a late and modified form of base moulding of that period. In the nave is a quadrangle brass plate, dated 1630, with six quaint verses in English, and surmounted by a shield of arms. On the chancel floor two brasses to priests remain. One, bearing a chalice, is perhaps that of Robert Ecton, Vicar, 1474. In the slab remains one of four scrolls. It is inscribed "Lady hellpe."

The other is that of a priest in academics, about 1510; the inscription of this one also is lost, but the four evangelical emblems remain at the corners of the slab. One of the most interesting brasses in the Church was that to John Borrell, Sergeant-at-arms to King Henry VIII., his wife and eleven children. The whole of the brass has disappeared, except two scrolls inscribed "Espoier en Dieu." Mottoes are of rare occurrence in brasses, and this is a good specimen. The figure of John Borrell is engraved in "Haine's Manual of Brasses," from a rubbing which was lent him by Mr. J. B. Nichols. But where is the original? If in private possession, why? and can it be recovered? The figure was of unusual character, and efforts should be made to recover it.

The oak door to priest's chambers is original workmanship; in the wall are two recesses, where probably the vessels of the Church were kept. The oak trap doors to upper chambers are original 15th century work, and I must call particular attention to the very handsome original iron rings and plates. The lead weight which balances this trap door is quaint in shape, and I have no doubt is the original. The larger oak chest is an extremely handsome and well-executed piece of work in the period of the church, and is in a very excellent state of preservation, the original locks and lid are the only missing portions. The oak balustrade is original. The smaller oak chest is of 17th century work. With regard to openings in the south wall, my opinion is that the lower one was originally the fireplace, the shape of the arch and the stone curb leading me to this decision; to the east of this opening at a higher level, is what was probably the squint, and through which the priest watched; this opening is now blocked up. Under the east wall of the Say Chapel is another despoiled slab. The figure was that of a priest. Two scrolls remain, bearing the inscription, "Ihu mercy," "Lady helpe." On the east wall of the chapel are two stone brackets, the one to the south having an angel holding a shield bearing a coat of arms, which we shall see repeated in the parapet of the chapel (No. 3). I have seen similar brackets before; the altar was probably placed between them. The alabaster slab on the north bracket is divided into eight compartments, each containing portions of the human skeleton. I call

attention to this gruesome object because I have not met with a similar slab before ; it is thought probable that this belonged to a tomb.

Sir William Say was undoubtedly in possession of the manor of Hoddeston, Edward IV. in 1468 having confirmed the right of Free Warren to Sir John Say, his father. The will of Sir William Say is preserved at the British Museum ; it is dated 1529, and is an extremely interesting document. It sets forth that he desires to be buried in the new chapel which he edified and built at his own cost. The tomb is built of stone, and stands under the arch between the chancel and north aisle ; at each of the corners shafts are carried up, which support a canopy, on the cornice of which is the crest of Say with roses below. The tomb is surmounted with an ornamental detail frequently found in this period of work. The soffit of the canopy is decorated with fan tracery, two of the bosses of which are mutilated ; on one boss is seen the crest of Say. The splendid slab of Purbeck marble over the tomb is quite plain, but in the panels at the head of the tomb were the effigies of himself and two wives, shields, &c., in inlaid brass ; and on the south side of the tomb were other brass effigies. The whole have disappeared. The carved oak and inlaid chair in the chancel is apparently of foreign workmanship of the 17th century, and is an unusually fine example.

The tower is square, built of flint with stone dressing, and has been restored, some of the original flint work remaining. It contains five bells, dating from 1615, three of which bear the founder's mark, a shield, on which is charged a rose and a fleur de lis in chief, an arrow per pale, with the letters R.O. in base. The front of the stone porch is an example of the pseudo classic work, probably built about 1700. Over the entrance is a shield bearing the same arms as those seen on the earlier shield on the internal face of the entrance. The Say Chapel is a fine specimen of ashlar work. The contrast between the stone work of this chapel and the cement imitation of stone work of the south chapel is extremely ludicrous. The stone parapet is panelled, and extends over six faces of the chapel, the east and north faces each having pediments. The pinnacles at the corners have been restored. The panels contain the following inscription, the letters of

which are very fine:—"Pray for the welfayr of Syr Wylyam Say, Knight, wych fodyd yis Chapel in honor a ye Trenete, the yere of our Lord God, 1522." The inscription is divided by coats of arms, one on each face—viz., 1, arms and crest of Say; 2, Say impaling, two bars on a chief, a lion, pass, guard; 3, impaling quarterly, 1st and 4th a fesse between three padlocks; 2nd and 3rd on a fesse, three Cornish choughs; 4, Say; 5, the same as 2; 6, same as 3, and projecting from the string course on either side of the shields is a sculptured stag's head, the crest of Say.
