



Much Hadham Church.

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Hadham upon Ash, otherwise Hadham Magna, or Much Hadham, is situate in a valley upon the river Ash.

The Church is dedicated to St. Andrew, and stands on the East side of the village. It consists of a Nave, North and South Aisles, Chancel with Vestry on the North side, and a square Tower at the West End. The Tower, Aisles, and Porch being battlemented, and the Tower having a lead-covered spire.

The exterior of the edifice is built with flints and stone dressings, and generally speaking belongs to the early

part of the "Perpendicular" period. The porch and tower being probably built about 1400, by Robert de Braybroke, Bishop of London.

In the Chancel floor are two brasses: 1st, an inscription in black letter—*Priez pur l' alme Alban p' sone de Hadh'm*, "and probably refers to Alan de Few, Rector of the parish, 1372." 2nd, a fragment of an ecclesiastic of which the upper portion only remains; he is dressed in acadimicals, and wears a cap, date about 1420. There are other brasses mentioned as being in the Church, but I have not had an opportunity of seeing them.

The arrangement of doors in the Chancel on the North side is somewhat curious. The door at present leading into the vestry was probably inserted after the window above it, the sill of the window has been cut away for the door arch. Perhaps the vestry was originally larger, and the door at the end of choir stalls was the entrance to the vestry, which may have had an upper chamber as at Broxbourne Church, the window being used for watching purposes. This window appears to belong to the early English period.

The tomb on the North of the chancel recessed into the wall, belongs to the 14th century or "Decorated" period.

The wall string belongs to the early English period, and it being returned on the slight recesses in the North and South walls, leads me to suppose that at the time there were transepts, in which case the chancel would have extended further East. Before leaving the chancel, attention should be given to the handsome carved oak screen which belongs to the "Perpendicular" period. The carved oak terminals to the bench ends are also very fine. The dado panelling on the North and South Nave walls being of the "Jacobian" period. On the North side above the oak screen will be observed the door which led to the roof loft. The Nave arcading was probably built in the "Decorated" period, but the mouldings have been so altered by being cleaned off and rubbed down, that it is almost, if not quite impossible to tell what they originally were. In the members of the arches on the North side are small ornaments placed at intervals, consisting of single leaves, small square ornament with four leaves, and the well-known ball flower, these also occur in the hollow of the Hood moulding.

The oak roof to the Nave belongs to the "Perpendicular" period. The carved stone corbels which carry the wall pieces are curiously carved, some of which represent the emblems of the evangelists.

Around the walls of the North Aisle, the Decorated string course is carried beneath the windows, this is also ornamented with the ball flower; but in this case the ball flower is placed upon the square four-leaved ornament. In the North Aisle are the remains of a Chapel—a piscina and the recesses in the window. The splendour of the Chapel may be imagined if we consider the whole to have been decorated in keeping with the portion of fresco on the North wall. The cusped head over the piscina I should say has been removed from some other part of the Church and placed here.

There can be little doubt but that the whole Church was at one time rich with mural decorations, the remains of which I am pleased to say have been carefully preserved throughout the Church during the late restorations.

The South Aisle as well as the North Aisle and Chancel contains a piscina, this is also of the "Decorated" period.

Before leaving the interior of the Church I must call attention to the enormous woodstock lock on the porch doors, I presume it is of the same period as the porch (15th century), and stands in striking contrast with its younger and more diminutive brother the rimlock of the 19th century. The ring on these doors is worthy of notice, for I take this to be the original Sanctuary ring—a fugitive taking hold of this ring would be considered in Sanctuary, and therefore safe from being molested. A great number of masons' marks are to be seen on the stonework, one arch having a mark on each voussoir.

The buttresses to the porch are both curious and effective, and I have been much struck with their beauty and proportion.

I understand during the restorations some of the original paving tiles were discovered, I should much like to see these remnants of the old Church brought back and placed somewhere in the Church. Fragments such as these are always valuable, and the greatest care should be taken to preserve them.