

Notes on Sarratt Church.

BY F. TREVOR DAVYS.

The parish of Sarratt is in the county of Hertfordshire, in the Hundred of Cashio, and in the Diocese and Archdeaconry of St. Albans. The village and church stand on the high Northern ridge of the valley of the river Chess, which river for a short distance up forms the division of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

The name of Sarratt, the Rev. H. Hall, M.A. tells us, may be traced to a corruption of Soar, signifying water, with the syllable yatt (or yott as in Ayott) which latter may be traced back to the Saxon word *gœt*, a very usual word to indicate a road; thus signifying, the road by the water, the *g* being generally transformed into *y* when the *g* is followed by a vowel.

The village stands on a long strip of a green, and is wanting in picturesque cottages. The extent of the parish is 1,550 acres, and the population in 1891 was 704.

Sarratt from an early period belonged to the Monastery of St. Albans, and is mentioned in the confirmation charters of King Henry the First and King John by the name of "Syret," but no mention is made of it in the Domesday Survey.

Its Manors, Mr. Clutterbuck gives as being distinctly two in number, viz., "Sarret and Rose Hall," which are now, however, vested in the same family, though came into their possession through the hands of different owners.

The Church, which is a mile South of the village, is dedicated to the "Holy Cross," and is built of flint facing with stone quoins. At most of the angles are large boulders of "plum-pudding" or conglomerated stone, commonly used in ecclesiastical buildings for foundations. The site is supposed formerly to have been that of a Roman Cemetery, for in the Churchyard fragments of cinerary urns, etc., have been frequently turned up.

The original plan was that of a Greek Cross, but when in 1865-66 Sir Gilbert Scott restored it, the Aisles and a small Vestry were added, during which work some portion of the Nave wall collapsed near the tower owing to the workmen excavating too near to the old walls which were not built on proper foundations; this led to the restoration being carried out on a larger scale than was at first contemplated.

The present plan gives us a Western tower 9ft. by 8ft. 10in. internally, with walls 3ft. 2in. thick, a Nave 28ft. 5in. by 16ft. 9in., a Chancel Arch 2ft. 10in. thick, Chancel 24ft. 9in. by 13ft. 3in., North and South Transept 14ft. by 12ft. 11in., North and South Aisles 13ft. by 11ft. 1in., with walls 2ft. 10in. thick between Nave, a South porch, and a Vestry on the South side of the Chancel.

During the Restoration remains of frescoes were discovered and some are now visible, though indistinct, on the East wall of the South Transept.

On the North side of the Chancel is a small apsidal trefoiled niche, 1ft. 6½ins. wide by 1ft. 11½in. high, and 1ft. 3½in. deep. It has been suggested that this was an Easter sepulchre, as among the furniture of the church is "a cloth of yellow silk for the Sepulchre." Adjacent to this niche is a locker in which the sacred vessels were kept, but the door and ironwork are now missing.

In the altar steps are some old tiles which were discovered. On the South side of the Chancel is a Sedilia, and West of it a Piscina of "Early English" style, with a shaft supporting two pointed arches. A second and smaller Piscina is East of these, and apparently of "Decorated" style.

Above is a monument to a man and woman kneeling on the opposite sides of a desk. Behind the man are six

sons, and behind his wife, one daughter. The date 1502 painted at the bottom of the Monument is supposed to be erroneous. The inscription itself bears no date, but the parish registers show that a William Kingesley who married a Katherine Tottell, was buried at Sarratt in 1611, and it is suggested that the Memorial was designed for him, as both figures have ruffs, and the head dress of the woman is similar to that of the two daughters of Sir Henry Cock in Broxbourne Church, erected about 1610.

The Chancel is curved with a tiled roof with purlins supported by three principal rafters of different construction, the design becoming richer towards the East end. The two Eastern ones have tie beams, but the Easternmost one is a nicely-proportioned example of a hammer-beam principal, with moulded timbers. Between the principals are covered braces, as an extra support for the common rafters which are laid showing the flat face.

The hammer-beam roof was adopted by the builders of the 14th and 15th century, and is a clever device of obtaining height, and strength, and getting rid of the tie-beam. Norfolk and Suffolk churches are peculiar for their enriched roofs of the hammer-beam construction, very generally having angels carved at the projecting ends of the hammer-beams.

The pulpit is a good example of Jacobean work with a nicely carved back-board, on which is carved the Scotch thistle, a sign of the time of James I. and a square sounding board over, on which is carved the quilloche ornament. The whole though is small in dimensions even for one of this date, the doorway entrance being only 1ft. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins. wide in the clear.

A few of the old square headed bench-ends remain in the North Transept, having moulded hand-rails but otherwise plain.

The chief peculiarity of this Church externally may be said to be in the upper portion of its Western tower, as instead of the more usual forms of termination to be found in this County, such as embattled parapet, with a short spirelet or Hertfordshire "spike," we find here a gabled or pack-saddle roof, with the gables North and South covered with tiles, which run through to the verges without coping. The upper portion of this tower is

built of bricks $9\frac{1}{2}$ in. long $4\frac{1}{2}$ wide and 2 ins. thick, and is of considerably later date than the lower portion.

In Normandy this is a very common, if not the commonest termination to towers, but in England it is rare, though we have examples at Brookthorp, Gloucestershire; Tinwell, Rutlandshire; Thorpe Mandeville, and Maidford, Northants; Chinnor, Oxfordshire; and a few other places.

In Mr. Clutterbuck's history of this county, Vol. I, is an extremely picturesque engraving of this Church taken from the S.E. It is dated 1815, so shows it in its dilapidated condition, before restoration, and addition of aisles, and vestry. In the tower is a peal of three bells, viz:—

	cwt.	qr.	lb.	date.
Tenor B.	6	approx	—	1719
„ C sharp	5	„	—	1606
Treble D sharp	4	1	7	1865