

XVI.—*On the Carved Bench Ends in All Saints Church, Trull, near Taunton, Somerset. Communicated by JOHN HENRY PARKER, C.B., F.S.A.; with Remarks, in a Letter from JOHN THOMAS MICKLETHWAITE, Esq., F.S.A., to HENRY SALUSBURY MILMAN, Esq., M.A., Director, and an Historical Note by the Director.*

Read June 29, 1882.

THE Church of All Saints, at Trull, near Taunton, in Somersetshire, consists of a chancel with chapels on either side, a nave with aisles, a south porch, and a tower at the west end of the nave; and the present building, although probably begun in the days of Henry VI., or even earlier, seems not to have been finished before 1560, which date occurs on some of the woodwork of the church. In consequence, if one excepts the tower, the whole building is, in style, Perpendicular. There is no chancel-arch, but a wooden rood-screen with a richly-vaulted overhanging canopy divides the chancel from the nave.

The east window of the chancel is of three lights, with ordinary Perpendicular tracery, and is still in happy possession of most of its old stained glass. In the centre light the Crucifixion, and in the side lights the Blessed Virgin and S. John are figured on a background of quarry glass in grisaille.

The wooden pulpit is apparently of the same date as the screen, and under five richly carved canopies upheld by angels, the following five saints stand in shallow niches, viz. S. John the Evangelist, and S. Gregory the Great, S. Ambrose, S. Jerome, and S. Augustin—the four great doctors of the Latin Church.

The Bench Ends, however, of the nave seats are the great curiosity of the church, as on five of them is a series of figures which undoubtedly form a procession. Some of these bench ends were found under the pulpit in 1862, and when replaced their proper sequence may not have been followed, and perchance some are lost.

I.



II.



III.



IV.



V.



VI.



VII.



VIII.



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Description of the Bench Ends.

No. I. The first figure represents a boy bearing a processional cross of ordinary fifteenth-century form, having three circles at the extremities,—and the stem for a short distance is of the “screw” pattern. The cross appears to be of metal, excepting the portion which the bearer holds in his hand, which would probably be wood. The boy has on a very short alb or cotta, and the stockings on his legs are shown with garters tied below the knee.

No. II. The second figure is that of a man with a beard; he bears a large candle in his hand, his costume is characteristic of the period and scarcely seems ecclesiastical, the breeches are striped, fastened up well above the knee, and what looks more like an ordinary coat of the period over it than any ecclesiastical dress. There is a little frillwork visible round the neck.

No. III. The third figure (a deacon) carries a reliquary; over his arm hangs a stole or possibly a maniple; it is richly ornamented. His costume again appears to be secular, as he has on striped or perhaps slashed breeches, fastened by garters above the knees; and a coat with a handsome collar to it, which does not appear to be an ecclesiastical garment.

No. IV. Then comes the priest bearing the gospels. He has on an alb larger than the deacon's.

No. V. The next is a priest in a cope carrying a book. The cope is richly embroidered and does not descend so low as the knees; below it is seen the alb with a fringe descending nearly to the ankles.

All the figures wear shoes, and are enclosed in plain moulded frames.

No. VI. On the next bench end, within a plain moulded border, are some of the Instruments of the Crucifixion. The cross is made like a tree, with projecting branches up each side, and also projections from the ends of the cross-piece; on the left above the cross-piece, the lantern suspended by a handle, below it successively the pincers and the hammer, all characteristically carved. On the right is the ladder having six rungs, surmounted by the cock. In three stages of the ladder is repeated an object not clear, but looking like a scourge.

No. VII. A carved border with Henry VIII. scroll-work, having the letter “S” in the centre, and arrowhead leaves as ornamentation above and below it.

No. VIII. A similar border, but having the letter “W” in the centre, held up by two birds, their long beaks forming the two inner lines of the “W.”

At the back of the furthest seat is a series of eight ornamented panels with the pattern usually called the linen pattern, and considered characteristic of the time of Henry VIII. Above these are two lines of inscriptions—the upper one: “JOHN WAYE CLARKE HERE”—the other “SIMON WARMAN MAKER OF THIS WORKE ANO DNI 1560”: and on one of the bench ends not figured here is the sacred monogram of the Holy Name with the usual contraction, under which is conventional foliage and fruit somewhat in the form of a fleur-de-lis.

While the above description was being prepared for the press the Director received the following valuable remarks on the subject:—

DEAR MR. DIRECTOR,

I have read over Mr. Parker's description of the carvings at Trull which you have sent me; and, as I do not altogether agree with his interpretation of the figures on the pews, I venture to send you my own account of them.

The great interest of the carvings is the light they throw on the ritual usages of a small parish church in the middle of the sixteenth century. We know pretty well what the services in cathedral collegiate and abbey churches were like, and we also know something of the usages in large parish churches, to which many priests were attached, and in which the chief services were performed, if not with the solemn state which surrounded them in the abbeys and colleges, at least with a great deal of magnificence. But things must have been very different in humble parish churches served only by the parson and one clerk. In days when men travelled little, and the interest of their lives was at home, the parish church was to them far more than it can be now. It was the centre of all their common life, social as well as religious; and, as we know that they did their utmost, according to their means, to adorn its fabric, so we may be sure that they also did what they could for the services. Now, with our English service, and every child taught to read, such a work is comparatively easy, but in the Middle Ages there could be no volunteer choir of laymen in village churches. But what men could do then they did, and here in these carvings we have a most quaint record of what was itself, without doubt, a most quaint function, to wit, the ordinary Sunday procession of a small parish church.

It is unfortunate that the pews have been moved, so that we cannot be

certain in what order the figures stood. I should also like to know whether all the ends are accounted for, because, if none are missing, there is at least one remarkable omission in the procession, to be mentioned soon.

The order for the carvings which has been suggested is a probable one, so I keep to it in the following description of them :—

No. 1 represents a boy carrying a cross. The cross is conventionally represented, and shows only three roundels, whilst the original probably had four. It seems to have been of the same type as that in the possession of the Society, and described in *Proceedings*, 2d S. vol. viii. p. 541. The roundels bear devices which might possibly be made out from the carving, but I cannot do so from the photograph. The boy wears a short, close-sleeved surplice, of a form which seems to have been much used by clerks in parish churches, and which we find called sometimes a surplice and sometimes a rochet. It was more convenient for those who had to use their arms than the full-sleeved surplice and less expensive both in first cost and in use than the albe, which was used by clerks when ministering in collegiate and monastic services. The surplice reaches to the knees, and there is some sort of ornament, either lace or embroidery, shown round the bottom and at the wrist. There is also a frill at the wrist, and a small ruff round the neck. All the other surplices to be described have the ruff showing above. The use of the ruff by surpliced choirs seems to have been common at a date somewhat later than these carvings, and it is even now kept up in some cathedral churches. I have seen it at Ripon, and, I think, at York. Below our cross-bearer's surplice appear a pair of sturdy gartered legs and square-toed shoes.

No. 2 is the torch-bearer. He is bearded and wears slashed trunk-hose and shoes, and a surplice of the same form as that worn by the boy, and also of the same size as his, so that it only reaches to the man's hips. But it clearly is a surplice, and not a coat or doublet as some have thought. The torch is not a candle, but is twisted, and carried in a short torch-holder.

No. 3 is dressed exactly like the last except that his trunk-hose are not slashed, and he has a maniple on his left wrist. I think that the maniple would not be used without the surplice or some such vestment, and that its presence confirms that of the other. I am not quite certain whether this or No. 4 should come first. No. 3 is probably intended to represent a man in orders, but can scarcely be a deacon, or I think that, even in this collection, he would have had a cassock or gown to cover his trunk-hose. He carries what may either be a reliquary or

a chrismatory, probably the former, unless the procession is intended to be that to the font at Eastertide.

No. 4 is a man in a surplice of the same general form as the others, but longer and reaching to the knees. He holds an open book, from which he appears to be singing. This might be a deacon or a second priest.

No. 5 is the parson himself. He wears a short albe or long sleeved surplice reaching to the calf of the leg, and over it a singularly short cope. No hood or orphrey appears, but the material is plainly shown to be figured velvet, and on looking at it one feels almost convinced that the original must have been red. The arms are thrust out in a strange and almost impossible way above the front band of the cope, and they hold up an open book as in No. 4.

All the figures except No. 2 are beardless, and none has any cap or other covering for the head. It will be noticed that neither holy water nor incense is shown. The omission of the latter need not much surprise us, though it might have been expected to be used where so much was spent on the furniture of the church as was here, but that of the former is curious, seeing that the sprinkling was the first purpose of the procession. If we have all the ends one might be tempted to believe that the carvings are of Elizabeth's time, after the use of holy water had been given up; the costumes may well be as late as this, and the only date about is 1560.

There need not be much said about the other carvings. The five figures in the pulpit are certainly St. John the Evangelist and the four Latin doctors, and St. Gregory is lucky in not having had his head knocked off. I think the slender cross on the pew-end with the Instruments of the Passion is intended for the reed. Even if there were not another end with more of the instruments the absence of the cross need not surprise us. The crown of thorns is also wanting. The "W" on another pew is not made by the prolongation of the beaks of the birds, but is held up by the birds with their beaks.

Altogether this is one of the most curious collections of old church furniture I have met with, and it is to be hoped that it will be properly taken care of, and above all things not "restored."

I remain, dear Mr. Director,

Yours very truly,

J. T. MICKLETHWAITE.

History of Trull.

Mr. J. H. Parker, after the reading of his Paper, favoured the Society with a set of references to books and MSS. bearing upon the history of Trull, and so enabled the Director to add the following note:—

Trull is one of a class of benefices, the history of which is such that their names do not appear in early ecclesiastical records.

A group of obscure vills or townships became, under the comprehensive name of the manor which overshadowed them, parts of the endowment of a religious house. When one of these had grown sufficiently in population and importance, the religious corporation built a chapel therein, and appointed a chaplain to perform the divine offices for the inhabitants, and in course of time made the appointment perpetual, and annexed thereto a fixed stipend. Then came, by the dissolution of the monasteries, the release of vills or chapelries from superior ecclesiastical corporations and their annexation to the Crown. Thenceforward the Crown granted out the tithes of every vill by its name. According to the nature of the grant or subsequent arrangements the vill or chapelry became a parish, which, in respect of tithes, was a wholly ecclesiastical rectory, or a lay rectory and ecclesiastical vicarage combined.

The earliest known notices of Trull are of the year 27 Hen. VIII. 153 $\frac{5}{8}$, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, vol. i. p. 170.

The possessions of Taunton Priory are found to include—

Exitus decimarum garbarum de Corffe Pitmyster et *Trull* cum oblacionibus et aliis casualibus ibidem, xij^{li} iij^s v^d.

Exitus decimarum garbarum de *Trulle* cum oblacionibus et aliis casualibus ibidem, vij^{li} ix^d.

The allowances from the Priory for stipends of chaplains comprise—

Johanni Sabbyn capellano de *Trull*, vi^{li} xiiij^s iiiij^d.

In 30 Hen. VIII. 153 $\frac{8}{9}$, the possessions of the Priory passed to the Crown.

In the account given (31 Hen. VIII. 15 $\frac{39}{40}$) by the king's officers of the estates then lately belonging to the Priory of Taunton, which account is printed by the editors of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, 1830, vol. vi. p. 167, occurs this entry:—

Trull. Firma rectorie, xv^{li}.

The Crown by lease, under seal of the Court of Augmentations, dated 21 Dec. 31 Hen. VIII. 1539, demised to James Dyer, gentleman, the "rectory" of Trull with its rights, &c. and all tithes and profits belonging to the same "rectory" and chapel (except those tithes of sheaves of Ham Wood and Cerne Haye, parcels of the said "rectory" of Trull, which were then in lease under the same court to John Smythe), to hold from Michaelmas then last past for 21 years, at a rent of 8*l*.

The history of Trull, in its new character as a lay rectory with a chapel, may be traced further down by means of the following Letters Patent : —

34 Hen. VIII. Pt. 11, m. 13 (20) [in which the above-mentioned lease is recited], 36 Hen. VIII. Pt. 21, and 2 Ed. VI. Pt. 4.

Mr. J. H. Parker caused searches to be made in the parish registers, in the episcopal registers at Wells from 1523 to 1581, and in the duplicates of these Wells registers at Lambeth Palace, hoping to find mention of Trull and the names of vicars during that period, but without success. It was said at Trull that in the time of Cromwell the bench ends were buried under the pulpit lest they should be destroyed, and that they were found only a few years ago and replaced.