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NETTLESTEAD CHURCH.

II.—EXTRACTS FROM NOTES BY THE REV. W. F. COBB, RECTOR.

A manuscript history of Nettlestead Place speaks of “a Brass Plate formerly prefixed to one of the flat stones, now lying in the lower Chancel of Nettlestead Church, whereon is a Latin inscription, viz. :—

Hic jacet Domina Margareta de Cobham quondam
Uxor Willielmi Pimpe Militis quae obiit 4 [Sept.] 1337.”

from which we learn that Margaret de Cobham, wife of Sir William de Pympe, was buried in the chancel in the year 1337.

The history proceeds to state that “the building or very much enlarging Nettlestead Church” “is ascribed to” Reginald de Pympe, “descended in a right line” from William, and assigns the work to about the date 1460.*

* This “history,” which Mr. Cobb has kindly allowed me to inspect, consists of 20 pages of quarto MS., the cover of which is endorsed: “Writing by Miss Morland 1812.” (It seems to be founded on another MS. of local origin, written anonymously in or about 1775, which also is in the rector’s possession.) The tradition therein preserved doubtless carries us back to Reginald, the son of William de Pympe, who succeeded his father in 1376 and died in 1438. He must have been the founder of the new church. A study of Mr. Ball’s pedigree (pp. 166, 167) shews that there was no Reginald who could have rebuilt the church in 1460. This date in the MS. is doubtless a mistake for 1465, the date given by Mr. Winston as appearing formerly in the east window of the chancel. The chancel was rebuilt after the nave, but probably some years before 1465. Margaret de Cobham must, therefore, have been buried in the old chancel, but no doubt her remains were duly translated to the new chancel. The MS. states that “the Tomb with the table stone over it on the north side of the Chancel is supposed to contain the remains of the founder, but as it contains neither arms nor inscription there can be no certainty thereof.” Any tombs which may have formerly existed have been built up and plastered over.—ED.

Of the extremely beautiful stained glass the greater part, especially on the south side, was shattered by an awful storm of hail, wind, and lightning on August 19th, 1763. A rector of the parish, probably the Rev. the Hon. F. J. Noel, in the early part of the nineteenth century, collected various fragments still left in the windows, and filled the whole of the centre light and the lower part of the two side-lights of the east window with these fragments for their better preservation.

Considerable alterations were made by the same rector in 1841 at the west end of the church. The arch in the tower was considerably raised* so as to admit of an organ gallery above a vestry, the ringing floor being made above the gallery. To give access to these a stone staircase was erected at the north-east corner of the tower. The window on the eastern side of the tower and the tracery over the door of the tower were brought by Mr. Noel from Teston, of which he was also rector. The window, which undoubtedly belonged to a previous church at Teston, was said to have been discovered in the churchyard wall at Teston. The history of the vestry screen and the stone mantelpiece in the vestry is unknown, but they did not originally belong to the church.

At the east end of the church there was a very plain painted wooden reredos, made by a Wateringbury carpenter probably about the beginning of the nineteenth century, which Mr. Noel removed to Teston Church; and in its place he constructed the five compartments which now exist in Nettlestead Church.

Until 1858 the church was furnished with high pews painted white, with a beading of mahogany at the top. On the south side between the two easternmost of the windows of the nave was a large erection of clerk's pew, reading pew, and pulpit, with a huge sounding board, one above another. The walls of the church inside were thickly coated with hair

* Apparently about 4½ feet. Six courses of inserted masonry can be distinguished.—Ed.

plaster and whitewashed, very much deadening the voice. In 1858 the walls were relieved of their thick coats of hair plaster and plastered with rough sand as at present. At the same time the church was reseated as at present, and a carved pulpit and prayer desk of pitch pine provided; the ceiling was removed from the chancel roof to bring in to view the old waggon-headed roof; and the lower lights of the three south windows in the nave were filled with tinted cathedral glass. All was carried out by Mr. Joseph Clarke, the Canterbury Diocesan architect.

In 1862 the south window of the chancel, which contained only a few quarries of its original glass, was filled in with the figures of St. Paul and St. Barnabas, designed by Messrs. Lavers and Barraud. Being one of the early productions of that firm it is by no means free from blemishes, but it has some good points about it, and as seen in the evening light has an attractive appearance.

In 1867 the opposite window was restored by the firm of Kemp, Bodley and Scott; the only additions to the original glass being the pediments on which St. Stephen and St. Lawrence stand and the little kneeling figure on the west side. These two kneeling figures are supposed to indicate that the window was either presented by or in honour of some religious house, and it is of historical interest to know that there was a moated building of some extent in Nettlestead belonging to a cloister of black canons at Tonbridge, which was suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey in 1525. The formation of the moat can still be distinctly traced in Moat Wood, Nettlestead, where the wood is cut down.

The first organ used in this church, about 1836, was a tiny little instrument of $2\frac{1}{2}$ octaves, which stood in one of the large square pews. In 1841 a new organ was built, by Mr. Goodwin of Maidstone, to stand in the gallery over the vestry. The present organ was constructed and erected by Mr. Henry Willis himself in 1869.*

* It is worthy of record that the three organs have been played by members of one family through three generations.—ED.

The ancient font has only occupied its present position since the erection of the organ.

The glass in the tracery of the three north windows of the nave is original, with the exception of a very few insertions by the skilful hand of the late Mr. Cauldwell of Canterbury, to whom the repair of the windows of the cathedral had for many years been entrusted.

The main lights of the central window are nearly filled with its original glass, giving the greater part of the robes of the Apostles and nearly the whole of the fine head of St. Bartholomew. It was restored in 1894 by Mr. T. F. Curtis, representing the firm of Ward and Hughes; and to him the church is indebted for entirely new work in the easternmost of the three windows—a careful imitation of the old glass in the central window. The two easternmost windows on the south side no doubt corresponded to the two opposite ones on the north, and contained the other six of the twelve Apostles, all having a sentence of the Creed above their heads.

Formerly there were three bells, and a century ago the valley in which the church stands was well known as the “three-bell valley.” They bore date 1700, without name or mark of founder. The tenor bell was recast in 1841, and the second bell in 1885, both by Messrs. Mears. In the latter year a fourth bell was added, and in 1897 a chiming apparatus.

The carved oak holy table and lectern were placed in the church in 1885, and in 1907 the present carved oak pulpit took the place of the pitch pine one of 1858. All were designed and constructed by Messrs. Wippel and Son of Exeter.

Here follow the epitaphs on the monuments preserved on the east wall of the nave, on each side of the chancel arch:—

(On the South Side.)

Here lieth the body of Katharine daughter of Thomas Smith of London Esquire. She was y^e wife of two noble gentlemen S^r Rowland Hayward S^r John Scott, Knights with whom she lived

successivelye a virteous & religeous life, then dyed a widowe in the 56th yeare of her age beinge after our Redemption 1616.

Let none suppose, this Relique of the Just
 was here wrapt up, to perish in the Dust.
 Shee like best frivits, a tymely season stood;
 Then (being growne in FAITH, & ripe in GOOD)
 With stedfast hope, that shee another day,
 Shovld rise in CHRIST; in DEATH here dowē she lay
 But that each part, w^{ch} her in life had grac't
 Might safe be kept, and meet againe at last;
 The WORLD, y^e POOR, ye HEAVENS, & this GRAVE
 Her PRAISE, her ALMES, her SOUL & BODY have.

(On the North Side.)

Heere lieth y^e body of Elizabeth Stafford, daughter to S^r William Stafford of Blatherwicke in the Countie of Northampton, Knight, & to Dame Dorothy Stafford, y^e daughter of Henry Lord Stafford, eldest sonne to Edwad, ye last Ducke of Buckingham, she was first married to Sir William Drury of Halsted in y^e County of Suffolke; Knight, by whom she had two sonnes & foure daughters. & afterwards to S^r John Scott of Nettlestead in the County of Kent Knight in y^e tyme of Queene Mary she lived in exile with her mother at Geneva (where her father dyed) & after at Basill, for y^e Gospells sake, at her returne, she was made a Lady of y^e bedchamber & privy chambers to Quene Elizabeth she dyed y^e 6 of February in the yeare of her Redeemor 1598 & in y^e 49 yeare of her adge.