

NOTES ON HILDERSHAM CHURCH BY CANON P. R. PHILLIPS, M.A.
HILDERSHAM CHURCH, CAMBS.

The date that this account was written can be deduced from what is written. It would appear to have been written in 1914. Canon Phillip Richard Phillips was Rector from 1899 to 1847, when he retired.

The name Hildersham according to the late Professor Skeat is derived from 'Hilderic', an Anglo-Saxon personal name. It is Hildricesham in the Domesday Book, but in the Patent Rolls of 1471 it is spelt as at present.

The Church is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It consists of a Chancel, Sacristy, Chapel, Clerestoried Nave, North & South Aisles & Tower.

The Tower which is early, in the 'Early English' style, without buttress or turret is the oldest portion of the Church. It has two entrances into the Church, which is very unusual. There are single lancets forming the N. S. & W. windows. During restoration in the middle of the last century the Tower was heightened about 13 feet. The approach to the Belfry is by means of a curious old ladder well worthy of inspection.

There is accommodation for five Bells, although there seem never to have been more than three. Three beautiful Bells hung in the Tower in 1581, & the smallest weighed 7cwt. 16 lbs. Here they remained unmolested for two hundred & twenty two years, but on September 12th 1803, two of them were taken away & sold, in order to assist the Churchwardens with repairs of the Church; the purchaser, however, absconded without paying for them.

The following entries in an old Churchwardens' account book will give some indication of how the Church Officers discharged their duties here 112 years ago

1802, October 9th, Bought a new lock for the Belfry preventing boys goeing in 1s. 0d.

This outlay would perhaps have been a more profitable one if it included the Churchwardens as well as the boys, as will be seen by the following items.

1803 July 18th. Paid for victuals & beer 2 Carpenters for pulling the Lead of the Church 2s. 0d.

1803 July 19th. Carriage of 44 cwt. 20 lbs. Lead to Linton 10s. 0d.

1803 July 19th For loading the Bells 2s. 6d.

1803 July 19th Paid Mr. Chappell Lead of do... 4s. 0d.

1803 Sept 12th. A journey with wagon & 4 horses to Hertford to carry the Bells & brought a load of Slate back £2 12s. 6d.

This is not bad pay for the use of a horse & cart for the conveyance of a load of little over two tons a distance of about a mile: probably the horse & cart belonged to the Churchwarden.

Bell ropes were a heavy item between the years 1765 & 1797; it amounted to £2 5s. 2d. It is recorded somewhere that the worthy man who served the office of Churchwarden considered the old Bell ropes as the perquisites of that office & acted accordingly, hence perhaps this extravagance. Other items refer to

"Shooting Ye Bellropes"

that is splicing & mending them in their weak parts.

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The three present Bells came from the foundry of Messrs. Taylor & Co, in the year 1880, the old one being used in casting the new ones. Their total weight is 24 cwt. 2 qrs. 1 lb. & the cost £223 13s. 9d., - allowed for the old Bell £28 6s. 8d.

The Nave has two bays, each formed by one entire & two half piers. The piers show quatrefoil section & are early Decorated with fine moulded caps. The bases do not stand level with the floor, but are mounted on large blocks of stone. The stone work underwent a merciless scraping during restoration, which gives it a modern appearance.

On the corbels below the roof are the coats of Arms of the Lords of the Manor from the Conquest to the present time.

On the North side from East to West:-

1. **DE VERE, EARLS OF OXFORD;**
Quarterly Gu. & Or. In the 1st quarter a mullet Arg.
2. **BUSTELERS:**
Lozengy Gu. & Arg.
3. **PARIS:**
Gu., 3 Unicorns' heads coupéd Or.
4. **ANDREW:**
Gu., a saltire Or.
5. **ANDREW & SOUTHCOTE:**
Arg., a chevron Gu. Between 3 crows Sab. Beaked Or.
6. **LORD PETRE:**
Gu., a bend Or. Between 2 Escallops Arg.

On the South side from West to East:

7. **MORTLOCK;**
Erm. Fretty Sab., on a chief Arg. Three fleur-de-lys Az.
8. **FASSETT:**
Arg., on a bend Sab. 3 buck's heads caboshed of the field
9. **HAMILTON:**
Gu., 3 cinque foils Erm.
10. **BARKER:**
Arg., 3 horses' heads Gu. Bridled Or., a chief Gu.
11. **COTTON:**
Sab., a chevron between 3 griffins' heads erased Arg.
12. **HUDDLESTON:**
Gu., a fret Arg.

The period assigned to the font is King John's reign. It is mentioned in the 'Vetus Liber Arch. Eliensis' c.1278 "Fons cum securâ" 'a font with a lock'. The font is of early 13th century date, octagonal in shape & supported on a central shaft & four other shafts. On each side is a canopy of delicate design. The circular basin is 23 inches in diameter & 13 inches deep, it is lined with Lead, & has a perforation at the bottom to drain away the water. All ancient fonts were furnished with covers & locks, lest water the water be used for enchantments. One of the staples still remains, & there are traces of the other to be seen.

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The windows are all of stained glass, & are designed in the Decorated style. The Chancel windows had been rebuilt in the 15th century, & when reparations of the Church were commenced about the middle of the last century, the Architect (the late Mr. J. C. Buckler, of Oxford) would have preferred the restoration of the then existing lines, but the late Rector (Robert Goodwin) wished the style to harmonise with that of the Aisles of the Nave. The changes were made accordingly.

There was a considerable amount of old glass in the early part of the 18th century. Most of the glass in the North East window of the North Aisles & in the South window of the Chapel is Ancient. The windows suffered more at the hands of the Linton Glaziers than from Will Dowsing's chisel. From the year 1763 to 1803 £51 13s 10d. was paid to these Glaziers.

The six Clerestory windows are "Architecturally Unique", the exterior is "Square-Headed" & the interior "Segmental".

Space will not permit of a detailed description of the windows.

The Busteler Chapel, so called after the founder:- William Busteler- was pulled down in the year 1803, & rebuilt in the early fifties (1850's).

The following items from an old account book are interesting:-

<p>1803, June 24th & 25th. Paid for digging down the wall of the chapel 7s. 0d. 1803, June 30th. Paid 2 men 3 days each digging down do. 10s. 6d. 1803, July 4th . Paid 2 men 3 days each digging down do. 10s. 6d. 1803, July 9th. Paid 1 man 5 days do. 1/9 8s. 9d. 1803, July 15th. Paid 1 man 5 days do. 1/9 8s. 9d. 1803, July 16th. Paid 2 men 1 day each digging down do. 3s. 6d. Total Cost:- £2 9s. 0d.</p>
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The most striking feature of this Church is the wooden effigies carved out of the heart of a huge Oak. They have stood the vicissitudes of well nigh 600 years. It is said that every stone of an old Church has its own tale to tell if we would but listen to it, but what a long & interesting history these effigies would unravel if they could but speak! They are the only specimens to be found in this diocese, & there are only ninety three in the whole of England & Wales. They were common in this country from the middle of the 13th century to the latter half of the 14th century. Sometimes the effigy was carried behind the coffin in the funeral procession, but more frequently it proceeded from the carver's workshop after death.

The male effigy is often spoken of as a Crusader. The crossing of the legs, as Dr. Cox observes, may merely signify that the Knight was a benefactor of the Church either by some conspicuous act of piety or by a benefaction in Church building, as in this instance by the foundation of a chapel. This effigy is 6 feet long, the head rests on two low cushions. He is clad in a 'Hauberk' & a sleeveless 'Surcoat' tied with a Girdle & reaching below the Knee. His right hand sheaths a sword, the left hand (1st & 4th fingers are broken) holds the Scabbard, the end of which is broken. The right leg has been repaired & is crossed over the left. The feet have straps & spurs, but the pricks have disappeared. A lion, signifying that he was a knight, lies at his feet.

The female effigy lies at present in the Sacristy to which place it had been removed in the year 1899 to make room for the Organ. It may be stated here that the "Separation Order" was issued by the late Rector Robert Goodwin, but in the interest of all lovers of antiquity a

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reconciliation is much to be desired if only the obstacles could be surmounted. The effigy is 5 ft. 8in. long. The hands are together in Prayer, & the head lies on two low cushions. She is clad in a kirtle with tight fitting sleeves, a long "Super-Tunic" reaches to her feet. The head is bandaged with a narrow fillet & a long veil falls on to the shoulders. A dog is at the feet. The date assigned to these effigies by Dr. Fryer & others is 1335. If that be so, they represent Sir William Busteler & his wife Margaret & not his son Sir Robert Busteler as is frequently mentioned in local guide books. The only authority for the latter is Lyson. Cole had no doubt the effigies were designed for William Busteler & his wife. He was Lord of the manor between the years 1300 & 1335. He & his wife are mentioned several times in the 'Patent Rolls' & other records of the reign's of Edward the I. II. & III In the 'Calendar of Close Rolls' for the years 1333 he is described as:

**"WILLIAM LE BUSTELER,
COLLECTOR OF CUSTOM IN CO. CAMBRIDGE"**

On the other hand, Baker in his MSS. States "In the window of the chapel was sometime this inscription:

"ORATE PRO ANIMA ISTIVS CAPELLAE"

Cole again says that he:-

<p>"had seen a broken inscription which was brought to me by a friend who had received it from a Glazier at Linton"</p>
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And one of the mutilated words was **"RECTORIS"**. Probably as has been suggested, the word should have been **"PATRONI"**.

There are four Brasses in this Church, well known to Brass Rubbers. Two of them are of excellent workmanship. They all belong to the Paris family who succeeded the Busteler's as Lords of the Manor & patrons of the living. An heiress is supposed to have married a Paris. The last of the family died in 1680.

The oldest brass is that of Robert de Paris of Caermarthen & his wife Alienora, the date according to Haines is circa 1379. This brass is on the Chancel floor in front of the Altar steps on the south side. The man & wife kneel besides an 'Octofoil' cross with 8 'Ogee' arches, with 'Finials' of foliage, & a foliated stem resting on a pedestal with four steps. In the head of the cross the 'Holy Trinity' is symbolized by an aged person with long wavy hair & beard, sitting on a throne & holding a 'Crucifix' 9^{7/8} inches long between his knees. The 'Dove', emblem of the 'Holy Spirit' is wanting, & it is a characteristic of this Brass.

The Brass on the North side of the Chancel is that of Henry Paris & his wife Margaret. He was the Grandson of Robert Paris, & died in 1427.

The Brass of Henry Paris, son of the above, is a fine specimen of a Knight in Full Armour of the period. He died in 1466. A characteristic of this Brass, seen for the first time, is the Lance rests or hooks fixed by staples & moveable pins to the right side of the 'Cuirass' to support the Lance when not in use.

The fourth Brass is a 'Shroud Skeleton' of a man. The length is 3 feet & the date (Haines) is 1530. Other ancient relics in this Church are the old 'Communion Table' in the Sacristy; the 'Piscina'; the 13th century coffin lid ornamented with a floral cross, lying under a canopied recess with plain crockets in the North wall of the Chancel; the old 'Elizabethan Chalice with the date 1569 engraved on it; & the Registers from 1558.

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The list of Rectors is complete from the year 1260, & includes men of great eminence & notoriety in their days e.g.:-

- 1: Dr. Burgoyne: Master of Peterhouse, &
Lady Margaret: Professor of Divinity (1518);
- 2: John Reston M.A.: Master of Jesus College (1520);
- 3: Dr. Fuller: Master of Jesus College &
Chancellor of Ely;
(Who [*Dr. Fuller*] figured as the relentless oppressor of
'Heresy' during the "Marian Persecution")
- 4: Dr. Smith: Master of Magdalene College (1629);

The following account of the history of the 'Advowson' is from a manuscript found by the writer (*Canon. Phillips*) a few years ago:-

NOVEMBER 8TH 1638:

Date of sale of Advowson of Hildersham by Charles Paris, and his younger brother and Sir Edw. Waldegrave &c. to Isaac Appleton Esq. of Little Waldingfield, Co. of Suffolk, for £400.

JANUARY 20TH 1648:

Date of sale of Advowson of Hildersham by Isaac Appleton of Chilton Hall, Suffolk to Henry Smyth.

OCTOBER 30TH 1683:

Indenture subsequent to the marriage of Henry Smyth and Mabel his wife, between him and Thomas Sowerby of Cambridge.

AUGUST 9TH 1707:

Mortgage from Henry Smyth and Mabel his wife to Mary Chambers of Newmarket.

AUGUST 7TH 1638:

Date of sale of Advowson of Hildersham R. by Henry Smyth and Mabel his wife to James Salt, Clerk, of Chesterton, Co. Cambridge, for £350.

APRIL 14TH 1801:

Date of sale of Advowson of Hildersham by Thomas Salt, Clerk, to James Goodwin, Clerk, for £1945.

The 'Advowson' is now vested in the names of certain Trustees of whom the present Rector is one.

P. R. Phillips, M.A.

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