

some living offender against a church which had become equally superstitious and remorseless.

The Chairman, the Rev. J. M. Gresley, read a Paper upon Blackfordby, Leicestershire, its Ecclesiastical History and its Chapel, with extracts from one of the registers, and some account of the Butt-House and of the Joyce family. His description of this picturesque little chapel was illustrated by a series of drawings in water-colour and pencil, by Miss Vavasour and Mrs. Gresley. An abstract of this Paper (with additions) is here given.

#### BLACKFORDBY, LEICESTERSHIRE.

NEXT to the fact of there being a priest there at the time of William the Conqueror's Survey, in 1081, the earliest mention I find of the church of Ashby de la Zouch is the gift of it to the abbey of Lilleshull in Shropshire.

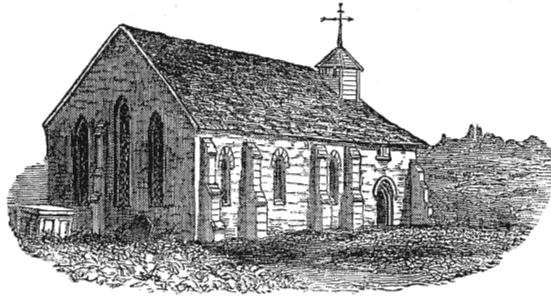
That abbey of Canons Regular of St. Augustine was founded about 1145, by Richard de Belmeis, the last dean of the collegiate church of St. Alemund in Shrewsbury. He was brother to Philip de Belmeis, lord of the manor of Ashby, who gave to these canons, then just come from Dorchester, "ad fundandam ecclesiam," (inter alia) "the church of St. Elene of Aessevi, with the church of Blacfordbi, to which sixty acres are attached." This grant was subsequently confirmed by Alan la Zouch, husband of Adhelicia, daughter and heiress of Philip de Belmeis, whose charter mentions forty acres in Blackfordby, three virgates in Essebi, and a fourth outside the town.\* There is land in Blackfordby still known as "The Abbey Lees."

The revenues from Ashby appear to have formed part of the abbat's income, and not to have gone to the common fund of the establishment. In the "Matriculus" of Hugh Wallys or de Welles, bishop of Lincoln, of all the churches in the archdeaconry of Leicester, A.D. 1220, (5 Hen. III.,) it is stated that "The patron of the church of Esseb' is the abbat of Lillishull, who has it of old for his own use. He has also the chapel of Blackfordby, which should be served three days in the week by the mother church. Roger, the vicar, was instituted by H. now of Lincoln."† When the general taxation of England and Wales was made by Pope Nicholas IV., about 1291, the church of Ashby was valued at £20. and the vicarage at £5. The abbat of Lilleshull then possessed *in temporalibus* in the deanery of Akeley £8. 15s. 10d.‡ In 1313,

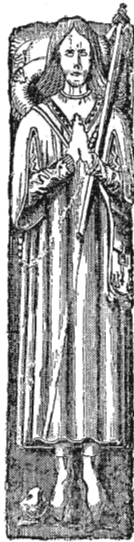
\* Nichols' Leicestershire, West Gosc. Hund. pp. 561, 562. Dugdale's Mon. Ang. vol. vi., p. 263. Eyton's Shropshire, vol. ii., pp. 204-211.

•+ Nichols' Leicestershire, vol. i., p. lviii.

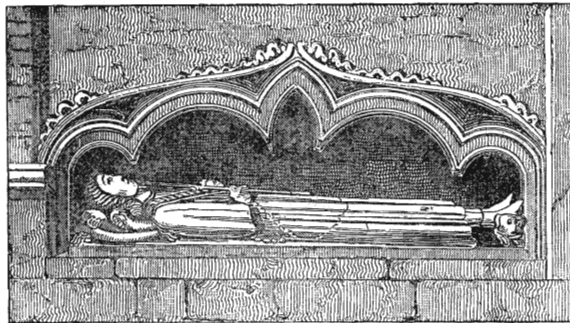
† Taxat. Eccles. P. Nich. IV., pp. 64, 66, 73.



Blackfordby Chapel, 1857.



Front view.



Pilgrim's Monument, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

he held half a knight's fee in Blackfordby of Alan la Zouch, which in 1328 was valued at 40s.\* In "Rotula Ecclesiarum intra Comitatus Leicestr' facta inter 1339 (13 Ed. III.) et 1349 (23 Ed. III.)"† occurs as follows,—

<i>Loca.</i>	<i>Procurat'.</i>	<i>Taxat'.</i>	<i>Denar'.</i>	Abbas de Lilleshull habet in prop. U-
Asbey de la Zouch	viii. vid. ob. q.	xxx marc.	iiiis.	sus.
Wodecote .. ..	Vicar: vii. marc: & dimid.			
Blakefordby .. ..				

In the "Valor Ecclesiasticus," (a report on an ecclesiastical survey made in pursuance of an Act of Parliament, 26 Henry VIII., for ascertaining the yearly value of the possessions of all the monasteries, churches, &c. in England and Wales,) a few particulars relative to Blackfordby are to be found.‡

The monastery of Lilleshull then possessed among their *temporalia*,—

Redd' assis' in Assheby de Lazuche et Blakeforby in com' Leic' per annum .. .. .	£. s. d.
.. .. .	vij xiiij —

Among their *spiritualia*,—

Firma decimarum ecclesie de Assheby de la Zuche in com' Leic' Lincoln' dioc' per annum .. .. .	vj — —
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Among the reprises are these items,—

Hospitali Sancti Jacobi apud Derby pro terris in Blakkorby .. .. .	.. — ij —
Johanni Walson Sen <sup>no</sup> de Assheby de Lazuche Blakforby et Frisley .. .. .	.. — xx —
Willelmo Watson Ballivo de Assheby de Lazuche .. .. .	.. — xx —

An annual pension paid by Lilleshull was,—

Curato de Blakforby extra ecclesiam de Assheby de Lazuche .. .. .	.. — lx —
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And among the annual procurations,—

Archidiacono Leic' pro ecclesia de Assheby de la Zuche .. .. .	.. — xj —
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The abbat and ten canons surrendered their possessions to the king, October the 16th, 1538.

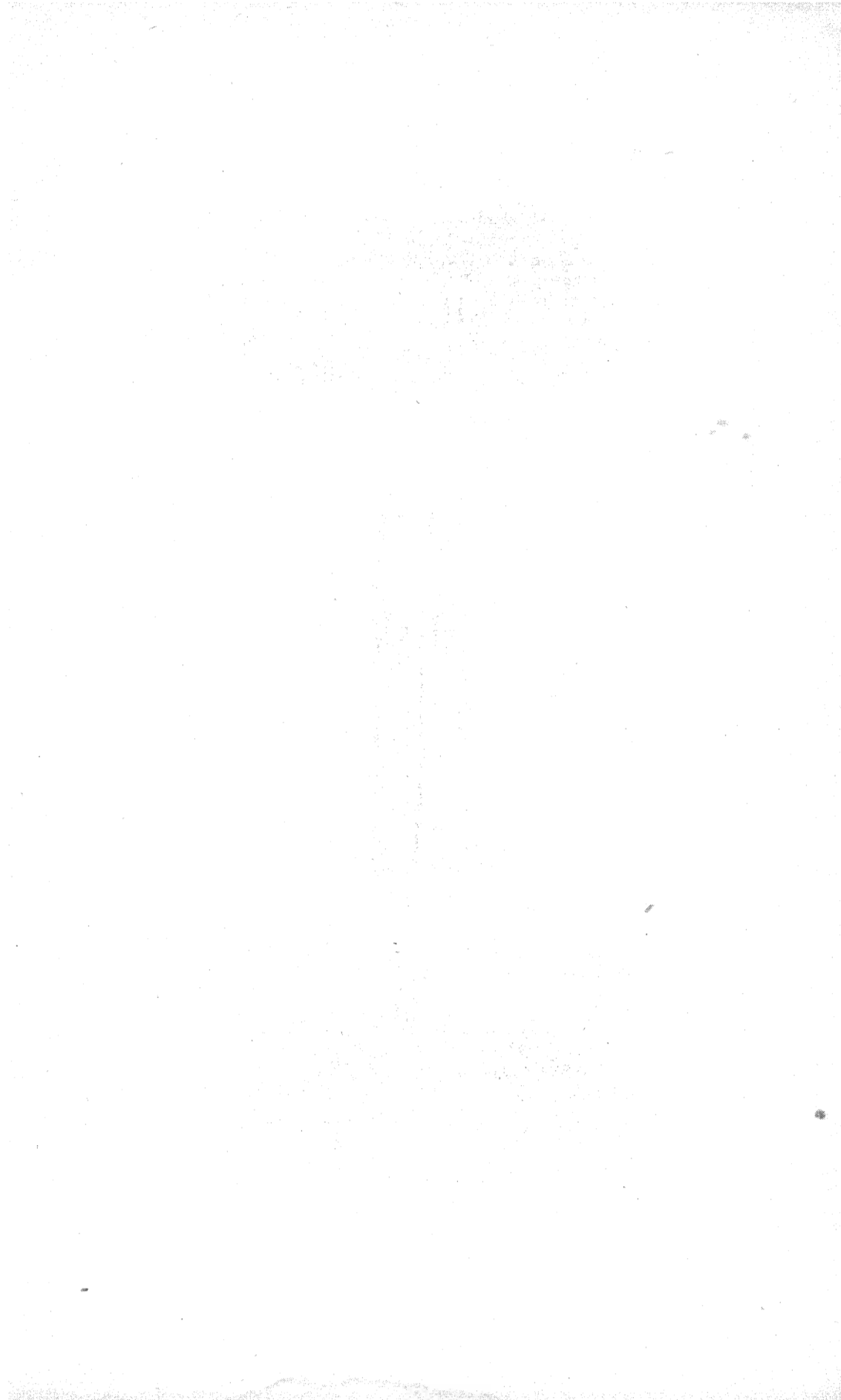
Not having access to such works as might give information respecting the disposal of the revenues of Lilleshull when Henry the Eighth laid sacrilegious hands upon the property of the monasteries and squandered them among his parasites, I can only say, that as George, first earl of Huntingdon, offered to assist the king in suppressing the righteous indignation of the people, exhibited in the "Pilgrimage of Grace," I think we may without breach of charity suppose that he availed himself of that circumstance to obtain a grant of the great tithes and advowson of the church of Ashby de la Zouch with Blackfordby in reward for his services.

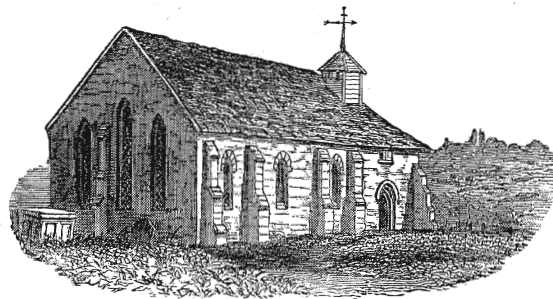
The great tithes of Blackfordby, as distinct from Ashby, have

\* Nichols' Leicestershire, West Gosc. Hund., p. 633.

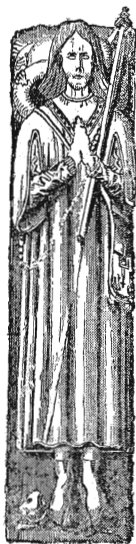
† Ibid. p. lxx., and a MS. copy penes J. M. G.

‡ Vol. iii., pp. 197, 198.

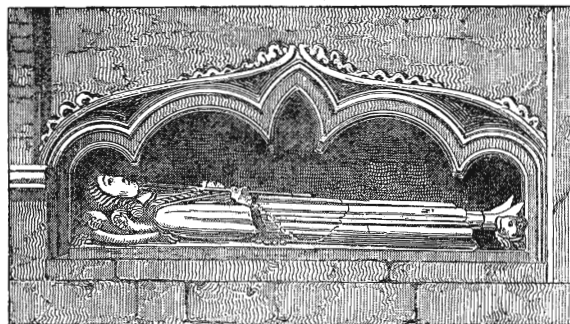




Blackfordby Chapel, 1857.



Front view.



Pilgrim's Monument, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

since passed to an illegitimate branch of the Hastings family ; and the present holder of them, Sir Charles Abney Hastings, Bart., of Willesley Hall, Derbyshire, is endeavouring by his (presumed) tenure of the chancel to throw every obstacle in his power in the way of the rebuilding of the chapel which is so much required.\*

Blackfordby Chapel is one of those old picturesque, unpretending buildings which are fast disappearing in these days of advancement.† For myself I freely confess a feeling of regret when their removal is thought desirable. There is a religious character about them which a new structure knows nothing of. Your new church has no associations with the past, and what shall we say of "the Church of the Future?" I was glad to find the old clerk of Blackfordby sympathizing with me. While acknowledging that "*something* wanted doing," the thought of the destruction of his old chapel brought tears into his eyes. He had been told that he was the only person who did not wish it away ; I replied that there was at any rate one man, not quite so good perhaps as himself, who felt as he did. It stands upon lofty ground, commanding a prospect of the country from Cannock Chase to Charnwood Forest. It appears to have been built in the thirteenth century, and consists of a nave and chancel of stone (not externally distinguishable), south porch of brick, and bell-cot of wood. The length of the nave is twenty-nine feet, and of the chancel twenty-four feet, internally : the width of both is about equal,—fifteen feet. A single step marks the division of nave and chancel, and a remnant of the ancient chancel-screen may be there detected among the woodwork by its mouldings.

The east window is of three tall lancet lights, which with their splays occupy the entire width of the chancel, having a bold and handsome appearance. There is in the glass a very well painted head of a female with flowing hair, crowned, and with a nimbus, holding in her right hand a shaft with a cross upon the top of it ; from which I conclude that this is a fragment of a picture of St. Margaret trampling upon the dragon. It has been conjectured that she was the patron Saint ; but the village wake begins on the Sunday nearest the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul.‡

In the south wall of the chancel is the priest's doorway with corbelled dripstone, now blocked up. The windows on this side of the chapel have all been enlarged and squared. In the north wall of the chancel were two small lancet windows with plain

\* This opposition to the rebuilding of the chapel was removed shortly after the reading of the above Paper. A new edifice has since been erected (1862).

† See the accompanying engraving of the north-east view of Blackfordby chapel, as it appeared in 1857.

‡ The wake is always on the Sunday before Saint James' Day, which is the 25th July. It is not therefore improbable that S. Margaret, whose day is July 20th, is the Patron Saint. J. M. G.

heads, and another remains further west. A fourth has been destroyed in order to admit more light to the 'pulpit. Opposite the south door is another doorway in the north wall, now disused. The west end of the nave is partitioned off for a vestry; above this is the singers' gallery, which they erected at their own expence. The west wall seems to have been rebuilt, and has only a plain square window. The side and east walls are supported by strong buttresses not coeval with the building: for so much do the walls lean outwards, that whereas fifteen feet is the width from wall to wall internally at the pavement, it is eighteen feet across at the ceiling. One of the buttresses on the south has the date 1684, and the letters *I*, perhaps for John Mugliston, a ruling power at Blackfordby about that time. There is a date also on one of the north buttresses.

The font is plain and circular, with a short circular shaft, and base of three steps. This is probably coeval with the chapel, if not earlier.

The communion table is sadly penned up with pews and rails. The reading-desk and pulpit have some carving about them, probably of the seventeenth century. They were brought hither from Ashby de la Zouch, when the mother church was re-pewed and re-pulpited about thirty years ago. The previous pulpit had an iron hourglass stand affixed to it, which reminds one of Gilby and Hildersham, the puritan preachers patronized by the earls of Huntingdon. This relic was thrown away as old rubbish when the pulpit from Ashby was introduced. The bench ends of the nave are very substantial and handsome: a bold moulding runs along them; the sides are sunk, and upon them is a kind of linen pattern in relief. The effect is extremely good. I shall be agreeably surprised if I find any so good in the proposed new church.

Nichols says, that "the roof, being open to the top, gives it the appearance of a barn rather than of a place of worship." This defect (as then imagined) has been since rectified by the construction of a neat flat plaster ceiling, which entirely conceals the timber, and cuts off the tops of the eastern lancets,—just fancy! I went through a trap door into this roof. Its tie-beams, king-posts, and struts, must have looked handsome. It was perhaps made in 1684: but there were so many bats squeaking and flying backwards and forwards, that I was glad to retreat as soon as I had made a note of the bells.

There are two of them. One has the date 1663, and the founder's mark. This mark is a square medallion (so to call it) bearing a Calvary cross, above the arms of which are a crescent and a star, and below them the letters *G* and *O*. I wish very much some one would tell me whose mark this is. I find it in several churches in the neighbourhood of Blackfordby.\*

\* These are the initials of George Oldfield, a founder of Nottingham. His bells are frequently met with in Leicestershire.—T. NORTH.

The lesser bell has the date 1724, and "GOD SAVE HIS CHURCH." This, so early in the Georgian era, and just when "*God save the King*" was becoming our national anthem, may have been the doing of "Blosserby Will," whom the Pretender (so miscalled) nominated as a Bishop, had the rising of '15 been successful.\*

There are only two monumental inscriptions visible in the chapel, but others may be concealed by the pewing. One of them, against the south wall of the chancel, is to the memory of Edward Newcomen, who died June 28th, 1722, aged 70, and Ann, his wife, who died April 10th, 1727, aged 63. Mary, their only surviving daughter, "erected this small piece of Marble." . . . . .

The other inscription is on a gravestone in the pavement opposite the porch, and turned north and south, and records the decease of Mr. John Chamberlain, on 25th Oct., 1702, and of Katherine his wife, on 4th Feb., 1716. . . . .

The family of Joyce have been the principal residents in Blackfordby for some centuries. In 1630, William and Ralph Joyce were freeholders here.

The stone altar-tomb just east of the chapel had . . . . . inscriptions recording the deaths of members of this family, and many headstones east of the chapel attest the decease of various others. . . . .

Mr. John Joyce, dying unmarried in 1818, was succeeded in the family estate (about two hundred and fifty acres) by his sisters, on whose deaths it passed to their niece Mary, daughter and heiress of their brother Thomas Joyce of Leicester, by his wife Mary Lockwood. Mary Joyce married Mr. Thomas Stokes, of New Parks near Leicester, and has issue one daughter, Mary Joyce Stokes. Although not a member of the Church of England, this gentleman has shown his generous disposition by recently giving half an acre of land for additional burial-ground at Blackfordby, and by resigning to the vicar certain rights of pasturage, &c., in the old chapel-yard. This piece of ground will serve as an admirable site for the new church now proposed to be erected . . . . .

The estate, however, is still occupied by a member of the Boothorpe branch of the family, Mr. John Hall Joyce, son of William Joyce, by his wife Mary Hall, of Tonge, in the parish of Bredon-on-the-Hill. . . . .

[Mr. Gresley gave many extracts from the parish register, and other information respecting the Joyce family.]

\* The Rev. William Vincent, ejected as a non-juror from the rectory of Ibstock, Leicestershire, is said to have officiated afterwards at Blackfordby chapel, and from thence to have derived this soubriquet. (See *Nichols' Leicestershire, Sparkenhoe Hund.* p. 933.) "Blangherby, anciently called Blakeforby," in Burton's Leicestershire, p. 46, is an error, for "Blaugherby," as it is engraved in his map of the county. The village derives its name from the clear stream which here rises and flows down the "town-street."

The Butt House in the hamlet of Blackfordby, but now in the Chapelry of Woodville, is described by Nichols as "a neat commodious" residence, which about twenty years previously (i.e. about 1784,) had come by purchase to the Rev. Mr. Astley, sometime head-master of Repton School and rector of Hartshorne. It appears, however, that the purchase must have been somewhat earlier, as the parish register of Hartshorne records that "The Rev. William Asteley, Rector, was Buried Feb. 9th," 1769. Upon his death it devolved to his sister Katherine, second wife of John Cave Browne, esquire, of Stretton-en-le-Field, and only surviving child of Thomas Asteley, of Westminster, gentleman. It was then sold to Mr. Leach, who built new garden walls and made other improvements.\*

The present building was probably erected about a hundred years ago, but it then supplanted an older house of the same name. In the accounts of the churchwardens of the parish of Hartshorne the following expense occurs in 1664,

Ite<sup>c</sup> p<sup>d</sup> when wee went of perambula[*tion*] the second time at Butthouse & Wildsmiths .. .. . 00 - 10 - 00

And again in 1671,

Imprimis. spent att the Perambulation att the Butthouse .. 00 - 12 - 00

In this entry, "Butthouse" has been substituted for "Brickhouse," now a farmhouse on the opposite border of the parish near the old road leading from Repton to Ashby de la Zouch, but then probably an inn. Again in 1680,

at Mr. Hattons goeing perambulacon	..	..	..	..	..	<i>s. d.</i>
p <sup>d</sup> more at Brickhouse	..	..	..	..	..	4 . 0
						3 . 6

From these notices of refreshments paid for when they went the bounds of the parish, it appears that the Butt House about two centuries ago was an inn by the side of the highway leading from Ashby de la Zouch to Burton on Trent; and very likely it derived its name from the butts of Burton beer there sold, one probably being set up for the sign of the house.

Or perhaps it is equally probable that its name was derived from being in the neighbourhood of the village butts. The practice of archery was once enjoined by authority, and many a village field still retains the name of "The Butts." The good people of Hartshorne were not neglectful of this duty. In their constables' accounts for the year 1627 are these expenses,

Ite pd for proclamac <sup>o</sup> n concerninge Artillerye	..	..	..	..	..	<i>xijd.</i>
Ite pd for makinge our Buttes	..	..	..	..	..	<i>ijs.</i>

And in 1634,

Ite Spent at Melborne when wee went to show our bowes [and] arrowes	0	1	9	<i>li. s. d.</i>
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\* Nichols' Leic., West Gosc. Hund., pp. 633, 1029.

After the practising they would adjourn to the Butt House to regale themselves.

The boundary of the parishes of Ashby de la Zouch and Hartshorne is close to the Butt House. Indeed I have been told by an ancient person of veracity that upon the 29th of May in the old "processioning" times round Ashby Wouds, before the enclosure of them in 1800,\* he has been compelled, when a lad, to pass through the temple of the goddess Cloacina in the garden in order to keep up the rights of the parish.

The occupier of the Butt House when Nichols wrote was John Simmonds, Esq. In his diary he records the following locally important events,—

"1801. May 1st. Post boy between Burton & Ashby went by Butt house 1st time about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 o'Clk, morn."

"10th. Sent a letter to E. & M. S.† by the post boy."

He died after a short illness in 1803, and his burial is thus recorded in the register of Lullington, Derbyshire,—“Novb. 24. Buried John Simmonds of the Butt House, Gent.”

Robert William Devereux Shirley, late brother of the present earl Ferrers, was born at the Butt House, Dec. 14th, and baptized Dec. 16th, 1825.‡ His father Robert William Shirley, lord Tamworth, died here, Feb. 3rd, 1830. || . . . . .

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*August 13th, 1855.*

A MEETING of the Committee was held in the Town Library, to take into consideration the arrangements necessary to be made for the first autumnal meeting, which it was resolved should be held on Monday the 10th September next. It was suggested that a meeting for the transaction of business should take place on that day, at two o'clock, to be followed by an ordinary at six o'clock, and an evening meeting at eight o'clock; and that the following day should be entirely devoted to an excursion on Charnwood

\* At that time the Butt House stood almost alone. Since then a populous village of potters has sprung up in its neighbourhood by the name of "Wooden-Box," or more commonly "The Box," derived, as is well known, from a hut set up there for a person to sit in to receive the toll at the turnpike. The *Historical Collector* may add that this wooden box was originally a port wine butt from Drakelowe Hall. In 1845 the name of the place was changed from Wooden-Box to Woodville, and formed into "The consolidated Chapelry of Woodville" by an order of the Queen in Council, June 17th, 1847.—See *The London Gazette of July 6th, 1847*.

† His daughters; Eliza, afterwards wife of Mr. Edward Mammatt of Ashby de la Zouch, and Maria, afterwards wife of Mr. John Pountney of Wolverhampton.

‡ Ashby de la Zouch register.

|| This paper upon Blackfordby was afterwards contributed by the Rev. J. M. Gresley to the Midland Counties Historical Collector, where it is considerably enlarged, and to which publication we must refer any reader wishing for more information upon the subject.