

exhibited a copper token (halfpenny) of Joseph Lovett, of Mountsorrel, dated 1667, and another of James Lee, dated 1656.

By MR. HUNT: Camel's tooth, found near the Dean's House, opposite Conway Bay, Llandudno; Roumanian powder flask and spoon made of horn; an old horseshoe, found at Old Ingarsby; ancient iron chest.

MR. NORTH, F.S.A., contributed the following Paper on

#### THE CHURCH GUILDS OF MELTON MOWBRAY.

IN most parish churches there was, in pre-Reformation times, in addition to the high altar, one, if not more, minor altars. These generally stood at the eastern ends of the side aisles, against the nave pillars, or, in cruciform churches, along the eastern walls of the transepts. Their former position can still be traced by the remains of ancient lockers and by the piscinæ—more or less mutilated—which are, in almost innumerable instances still extant. Our parish churches, doubtless, in many cases owe some of their finest architectural features to the cause which called these altars into existence. It was desired by a wealthy private person, or by a company of less opulent ones associating themselves together as a fraternity or guild, to provide for the spiritual benefit of themselves and of their friends in this life and after death. This was to be effected—as was then thought—by the daily celebration of Mass, and by the occasional recitation of other Religious Offices by a priest or priests engaged for the purpose. To secure the payment of the necessary stipends, an endowment was generally made in the one case, and an annual sum raised by the members of the guild in the other. It also became necessary that an altar should be erected, usually in the parish church, at which these Offices could be said, and it was desirable that it should stand in such a position as not to interfere with the high altar, at which the parish Mass was sung. In large churches there would, in most cases, be no difficulty as to room, but in smaller country ones it was frequently necessary to erect a side aisle, at the eastern end of which the altar could stand, and which aisle became known as

pieces of the beautiful red Samian ware—one fragment of which bore the maker's name, "Titvronis, F."—also a curious bronze fragment which resembled in its intertwined circles the ornaments of the late Celtic period. These were secured by the ever watchful care of G. H. Nevinson, Esq., for the Town Museum, where they are now displayed. The purpose of the building thus uncovered is not easy of determination; but it appears highly probable that the concrete floor was part of the bath-room, whilst the conduit beneath might either be for the entrance or escape of water. If this be the case it is a remarkable fact, as the site of the Public Baths which the Corporation propose to erect here is distant but a few feet; the ancient and modern buildings being thus on the same spot.—*Leicester Chronicle.*

the chapel or chantry of the family or guild erecting it. It is quite unnecessary to point out examples. They are too numerous for many of them not to be well known. By existing records, too, we frequently know by whom the chantries and guilds formerly existing in different parishes were founded and supported. In some instances, however, where from any cause the guild or chantry priest was "disendowed" before the hands of Henry VIII. or Edward VI. were laid upon the sources of his stipend, no evidence is afforded by the public archives of the kingdom or by parochial records, and so the architectural indications already referred to in the parish church are the only evidences of the former existence therein of a private chantry or the guild altar. Until recently this was the case at Melton Mowbray. During successive reparations in the noble church of that parish, when the walls of its fine transepts were gradually denuded of the thick coats of plaster and colour-wash with which successive generations of churchwardens had covered them, the marks of the former existence of several altars were discovered. There were clearly five or six, at least, of these minor altars in Melton Church, and the eastern wall of the south transept was the position chosen for several of them. As some of these architectural features were, until recently, hidden from view, so the only local documents which could throw even a faint glimmer of light upon the ancient altars and guilds to which they formerly belonged were also lost to sight for very many years. I have upon several occasions referred to the manuscripts discovered a few years ago in Melton, which so much illumine its history of three hundred years ago. I find in those documents some information which may be worth collecting, as affording a clue to the origin of some of the minor altars to which I have referred as formerly existing in its parish church.

With regard to two of these the references are very brief; they occur in the churchwardens' accounts for the year 1549, thus:—

"Rd. of Bartyll Newesowme for ij pecs of woode of  
 Sainte Nicholus aulter ..... xiiii*d*.  
 "Pd. to rogr Gervys for takying downe th alter in the  
 vestre\* ..... xx*d*."

Two other altars belonged to the Guilds of Our Lady and Saint John. Although I find no entries relating to the latter altar in the church, there is abundant evidence as to the existence of the Guild, and which will be referred to presently. S. Mary's altar is incidentally alluded to in an ancient, and very curious

\* There was sometimes an altar in the sacristy or vestry of cathedrals at which minor clerks or suffragans were ordained; and young priests learned to celebrate mass. (Walcott's *Sac. Arch.*, p. 523.)

inventory of "Sylvyr Juells of the churchys" already contributed by me to the Transactions of this Society. It is there noted:—

"Itm̄ more there ys a chest standyng by Our Lady's auter wher in ys dyvers reconyng and wrytyng wt evydence wheche belongyng to the church and to bothe the gelds whyche were nesyssary to be loked upon substanstally wt dyvers of the honest men of the prshe for the intent yt hett may be knowen in what statte the church wt the gelds stands in."

The chest was apparently placed by the side of the altar as a sacred, and therefore safe, place. I find nothing more relating to this altar until the year 1547, when the churchwardens charged tenpence for "Coloryng ye pulpit and ye poor master chest and ye leiff of ye table of ye lady altr"—probably a picture or reredos at its back. And, once more, we note its destruction in 1553-4, when, after selling the high altar case, the churchwardens credit their account:—

"Itm̄ Recevid of mastr gyles for or ladyes case and  
bords ..... xiijs. iiijd.

In the bell chamber still hangs a bell inscribed "BEATA MARIA," which was called by the churchwardens "Our Lady bell," but whether it was used for the services at this altar, or for the ringing of the *Angelus*, I cannot say.

On the 15th of December, 1545, commissions were issued to examine into the state and value of the lands belonging to Chantries and Guilds. Injunctions were sent "to the parson, vicar, curate, chaunter, priests, churchwardens, and two of the most honest persons" in each parish where such fraternities existed requiring from them an exact return showing the titles, statutes, possessions, and rental of the Guild or Chantry, and the uses, abuses, or misuses connected with the same. Also specially enquiring whether any property had been sold or otherwise transferred since the 4th February, in the twenty-seventh year of the King's (Henry VIII.) reign. Many of these returns exist. The death of Henry VIII. appears to have stayed further proceedings with regard to Guilds and Chantries. The respite was, however, short, for soon after Edward VI. had ascended to the throne a Bill for giving their possessions to the King was brought into the House of Lords, and (notwithstanding considerable opposition from the bishops) passed into law. Visitors or Commissioners were sent to inquire into the state of the different fraternities, and to arrange for the sale of their possessions.

These Visitors were in Leicester in the year 1547-8, when the Mayor—as was then usual—regaled them with wine.\*

Although I cannot trace the actual visit of these Visitors to Melton, the effect of the then recent Act is apparent in a conveyance or charter endorsed "Spyttyll Chappelle," now extant. This instrument, dated 29th September 2 Ed. VI., after the usual salutations, recites that the most excellent Prince and our sovereign Lord Edward the Sixth, &c., &c., by his letters patent, bearing date the 6th day of August, in the second year of his reign, did for a certain sum of money grant to William Gyles and one Michael Purefey, all that messuage or tenement named the "Chappell" House, otherwise "the Spytell Chappell," and one close of land with its appurtenances, then or late in the tenure or occupation of Denis Shephard, situate in Melton Mowbray, late belonging to the late Guild of S. Mary, of Melton Mowbray; then after reciting that by a deed, dated 8th of August in the same year, the said Michael Purefey had assigned his share of the property to the said William Gyles, the document proceeds to grant and confirm for "a certain sum of money," to Christopher Draper, citizen and ironmonger of London, his heirs and assigns for ever, the above-mentioned messuage or tenement and close of land. An endorsement shows that possession of the premises was delivered to the said Christopher Draper, on the 18th of October, in the same year, in the presence of twelve witnesses, whose names are given.

The "certain sum of money" mentioned as the consideration in the above recited deed gives no clue as to the value then placed upon the property therein mentioned as formerly belonging to the Guild of S. Mary, in Melton Mowbray. We, however, trace its passage into the hands of the King, and its being granted by him to two persons who quickly transferred it to Christopher Draper. This holder—no doubt looking upon his title as precarious—very soon entered into negotiations with Nicolas Cowlishaw, of Melton, to sell this property to him on behalf of the town. The transaction is thus traced in the accounts of the Townwardens for the year 1549:—

Ao. 1549.

"Itm paid by Nicolas Collishaw to Cristor. Draper of london, the xxi day of Novembre ffor a pseill of land with apprtances lately called the Chappill house in Melton bought to the Town of Melton use .....xxj*li*.  
 "Itm pd to Mr. Cartlyn ffor makynge the writynge ffor assurance ..... xjs. viii*d*."

\* See North's *Chronicle of S. Martin's Church*, p. 230-234.

"Itm pd to Nicolas Colishawe for his charges to  
london and about the seid bussinesse .....xxs."

Thus this property was added to the Town Estate.

As before said the Injunctions sent out in 1545 specially inquired whether any property formerly belonging to chantries and guilds had been sold or otherwise transferred since 4th February, 27 Henry VIII. This was intended to check the seizure by private persons, or by public bodies, of property which the Government intended to appropriate to its own benefit. Notwithstanding the efforts so made to secure all the property of the dissolved guilds and chantries, lands in many places were quietly taken possession of by persons dwelling in the locality. Property so appropriated was called by the Government "Concealed lands," and many disputes and much litigation followed in numerous instances between the agents of the Government and the then holders, as to the legal title of the latter to their possessions. Disputes of this kind were carried on for several years with regard to certain houses and lands in the parish of Melton Mowbray, the records of which throw some light upon our present subject.

There is a document existing which shows that an Inquisition was held on the 16th of August, in the eighth year of Queen Elizabeth, before two Commissioners,\* when evidence upon oath was given to the effect that there were of late within the town of Melton Mowbray two guilds called by the names of Saint John and Saint Mary, otherwise "S. John hys guilde and our Ladies Guylde," and that divers messuages, lands, tenements, &c., &c., within the parish and fields of Melton did belong and appertain to the guilds aforesaid, and were parcels of the possessions of the same: and further that certain lands called "S. John's Wonges," lying within the parish of Melton, and one meadow called "Our Ladyes meadow," within the same parish also belonged to the guilds aforesaid. The Commissioners found that by reason of a certain statute for the dissolving and determining of chantries, guilds, &c., published in the first year of Edward VI., these lands, &c., ought to devolve to the Crown, but that they had been concealed and unjustly detained from the Crown from the time of the said Act, and were still detained, and that the clear annual value was £5. 6s. 8d. The town at that time had possession of the property in dispute, and applied the proceeds to the payment of the schoolmasters, the repair of highways and bridges, &c., &c., and, notwithstanding the report of the Commissioners, possession appears to have remained in its hands, for eleven years subse-

\* The Townwardens for the year 1566-7 charge:—

Itm allowed Hughe Edwarde his wife for a dyner when the Commissioners satte here aboute the Towne land and for horse meate for the justices horses, and Mr. Hunts, as appith by her bill ..... xlijs. vjd.

quently the dispute was renewed. A complaint was made that the lands, &c., were "concealed lands," and an action was brought against the tenants calling upon them to prove the title of the town. Amongst the questions asked was "Have the profits bene employed to the use of a brotherhood or gylde wthin fyve yeares before the parliament holden in the fyrst yeare of the reign of the late King Edward the sixte?" and we gather that the priests were called "priests of S. John and our Ladie otherwise called morrowe masse preists and eight o'clocke preists." The whole proceeding, however, is worth relating, and is thus epitomised from documents now preserved amongst the Melton manuscripts:—

John Marsh, of London, Esq., and William Marsh, his son, having made a complaint against Richard Trafforde, William Lacye, Robert Oldham, and William Trigge that they had become possessed of certain lands and tenements in Melton Mowbray, called in consequence "concealed lands," which had formerly belonged to certain guilds or brotherhoods called S. John's Guild and the Guild of the Blessed Virgin, and which ought to have gone to the Crown at the dissolution of guilds, a commission was opened at Leicester on the 19th day of April, 19th Elizabeth, before Kenelm Digby and George Villiers, Esqrs., when witnesses were heard on both sides.

The depositions of these witnesses are preserved amongst the Melton Papers, and from them is gathered the following information as to the guilds.

For complainants:—

Christopher Whitehead, of Denton, Co. Lincoln, said he knew Sir John Stevens, and that he served a place in the church there (*i.e.* Melton) called "Our Ladies Aultar," and that he was called "Our Ladie Preste" but "how longe it is since he knowes not, and that he had foure poundes wages paied by yeare by the wardens of the towne but how it was levied he knowes not."

Henry Tallis, of Melton Mowbray, said that "Crofer Whiteheade and Willm Carver were wardens of the said Guildes, and that it is aboute eighte and twentie years ago (as he thinks) since they were wardens there and they were the laste wardens there." He goes on to say that there were two or three little wongs in Melton fields belonging to the Guild, other pieces of land elsewhere, a house in his own occupation, which he purchased of the Queen, and eight or nine houses standing together in a street between the "Shepe Crosse" and the "Spittall Chappell," which also belonged to the Guild.

Robert Parker said there were in Melton "two Guildes, one called Our Ladies Guild and the other called S. John's Guild."

Bartholomew Wormwell said Sir John Stevens had £5. 6s. 8d. yearly, and that the Guilds were dissolved thirty-five or thirty-six years ago.

For defendants :—

William Waringe said the priests were discharged in the reign of Henry VIII. about thirty-seven years ago, and did not there say Mass since to his knowledge. He said the Guild possessed no lands. The priests were paid by the town wardens; but certain lands did belong to the town for the reparation of the bridge and amendment of the highways and repair of the church and to the use of the school.

William Lane said he had known the Grammar School for fifty years; that there had been fifty scholars therein, but of late about 100 scholars there; that the land, &c., in dispute had been applied to the support of the school. He mentioned "one house called the Spittall, which the townsmen thereof purchased of Alderman Draper, of London." He said that Wm. Brookesby and others made a feoffment to one Thomas Posterne and others of all the said lands, to the use that the profits and rents thereof should be employed to the maintenance of the said school, and repair of bridges and highways there. He also tried to damage the witnesses for the complainants, by saying that Tallis, Parker, and Chambers were men of "evill fame," and that Tallis "is a drunkard and vehemently suspect for stealing of a Hogge," and that Parker "is a drunkard," and that Chambers "is a drunkard and did steale Iron out of Melton Church Steple."

This action was brought against the defendants as tenants under the town. That the town obtained the verdict is evident from an ancient list of documents belonging to Melton in which I find "An exempl of a verdict 20 Eliz.: A verdict against Mershe for concealed lande."

This is no doubt a sample of what was going on at that time in many places, and which as giving a slight illustration of some of the proceedings of those days, may not be altogether beneath our notice; at any rate those of us who know the grand church of Melton Mowbray will not take a less interest in some of its mutilated architectural features now we have become better acquainted with a few of the circumstances to which they point.

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*November 27th, 1876.*

The REV. J. H. HILL, F.S.A., in the chair.

The following gentlemen were elected members :—

The Hon. Harry Tyrwhit Wilson, Keythorpe Hall; the Rev. Canon Yard, The Confraternity, Leicester; Richard Twining, Esq., Bitteswell; the Rev. G. Salt, Woodhouse Eaves; the Rev. W. C.