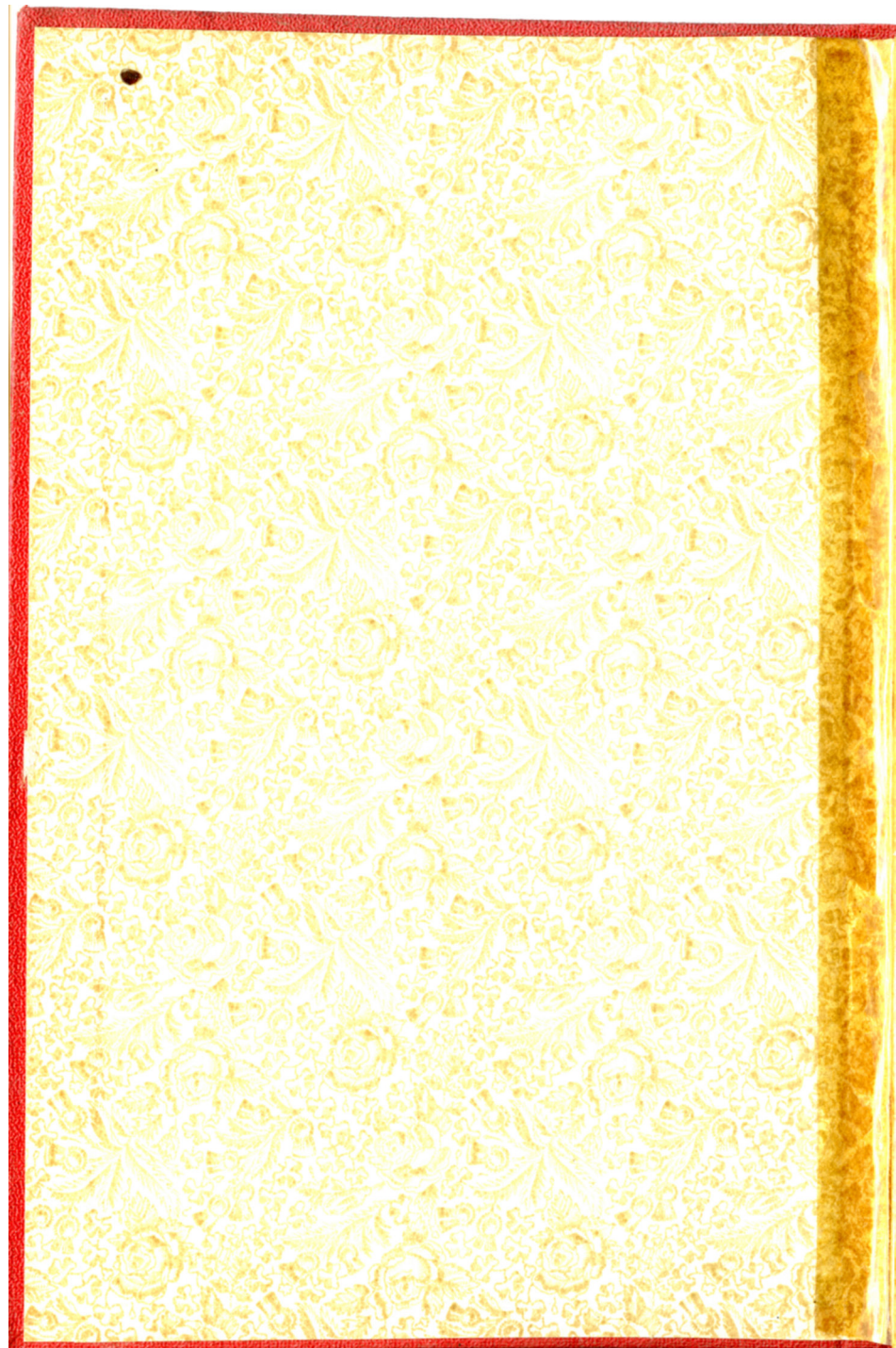


HISTORY
OF
ST MARY'S CHURCH,
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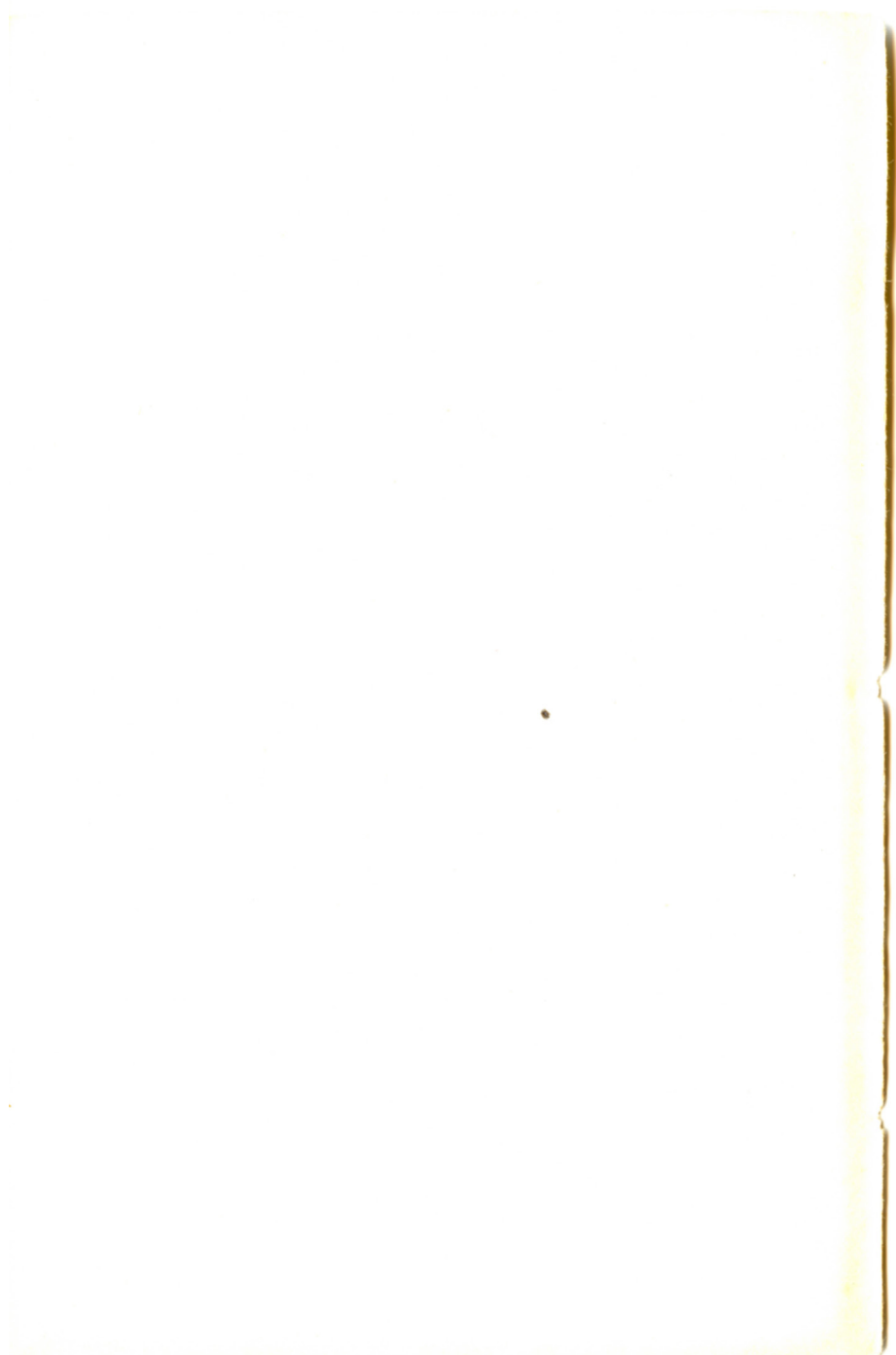






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HISTORY
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St. Mary's Church, Crich.

HISTORY
OF
**St. Mary's Church,
Crich.**

2
A. B. DONE.

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PREFACE.

IN submitting this history of Crich Church, I desire to express my great indebtedness to Dr. J. Charles Cox, from whose account and description of the Church, as published in "Derbyshire Churches," I have gathered many facts, without which such a history must have been meagre and incomplete. I further thank him for kind suggestions, and for his revision of my manuscript before it was placed in the hands of the printer.

My thanks are accorded also to all those who have assisted me by the loan of old books, documents, etc., dealing with this subject.

ARTHUR B. DONE.

Crich Church.

Crich, one of the hill villages of Derbyshire, is situated about five miles to the south-east of Matlock. At the present date it has about three thousand inhabitants, most of whom are engaged in agriculture or quarrying. It is a place of great antiquity, and previous to the Roman invasion was probably a native stronghold. Unfortunately the rough circles of Druidical stones, which previously existed in the neighbourhood, have been gradually demolished by later residents. During the Roman occupancy it was a place of considerable importance as a lead mining centre; of late years, however, this industry has practically died out.

At the survey taken by the command of William the Conqueror, and recorded in Domesday Book, the manor of Crich is stated to have been held by Ralph Fitzhubert, who is reported to have been hung during the Civil War of Stephen's reign. His son was created Baron of Crich, and it was probably during his lifetime that the church was erected. There is strong evidence that the edifice was dedicated to St. Mary—in support of this, tradition states that a statue of the Virgin once stood in the vacant niche in the front of the tower, and was removed later to St. Mary's, Nottingham. It would appear that the church has come to be called St. Michael's through the local wakes being held at Michaelmas.

During the lifetime of Hubert Fitzralph the church of Crich was confirmed to the Abbey at Darley. Of the original edifice, erected nearly eight hundred years ago, and which consisted of the nave and north aisle, there are considerable remains, while the font in use to-day probably dates from the church's dedication. It is almost certain that in the year 1280, Archbishop Peckham personally visited Crich while making a round of visits to different parishes in the Midlands, and, amongst other matters, settled a dispute which had arisen between the parishioners of Crich and the Abbot of Darley.

During the years 1300—1400, the church appears to have been thoroughly renovated and re-built, and, as in the case of many old churches, various types of architectural style are to be found. The north arcade of nave, erected about 1185, and that of the south arcade, probably a few years later, are Norman. The windows of the south aisle erected about 1320, the chancel, tower, spire, and north aisle about 1350, belong to the Decorated style. The nave was raised in the Perpendicular Period—thus the roof and the clerestory windows, as also does the porch, belong to that period, the probable date being about 1400.

The family of De Wakebridge were always closely associated with Crich. During the reign of King John a marriage took place between Peter de Wakebridge and Emma, sister of the then Lord of Crich. Their great grandson, as a knight of the shire, represented the county in several parliaments of Edward III. It is, however, to Sir William de Wakebridge, a son of the latter, that Crich church is most deeply indebted. This redoubtable warrior, with probably some of the inhabitants of Crich, took part in the opening battles of the Hundred Years' War—a war famous for the English victories at Crecy, Poitiers, and many years later at Agincourt. Shortly after his return, the whole country was devastated by that terrible plague known as the "Black Death." This awful malady carried off more than half the population of England. Within three months Sir William lost his father, his wife, three brothers, two sisters, and a sister-in-law—how many of Crich's humbler inhabitants perished during that dreadful year 1349, we shall never know.

Sir William, after this visitation, decided to found a chantry or endowed chapel, in connection with Crich church, in which, besides services appointed for other days, on the feast of St. Katharine (Nov. 25th) each year, full service of the dead was to be said, and a distribution of ten shillings made to the poor. This chantry, which was dedicated conjointly to Saints Nicholas, Katharine, Margaret, and Mary Magdalen, was situated at the east end of the north aisle, and the effigy to be found in the niche of that aisle is generally thought to be that of the donor. There is perhaps no one matter in connection with Crich church more discussed than the question with regard to this tomb and effigy. A claim has been made by the representatives of the Bellairs family that the effigy is that of Sir Roger Beler, at that time lord of the manor of Crich, but the evidence avail-

able points with almost absolute certainty to the effigy being that of Sir William de Wakebridge. When the monument was placed in position, two angels were supporting the man's head, but that on the left is now broken off. The mutilated figure on the right holds a Katharine wheel to the ear of the effigy. It may be remembered that St. Katharine was martyred at Alexandria, in Egypt, in the fourth century, by being bound to a spiked wheel—hence the “Katharine wheel,” with which she is commonly represented. The example of Sir William's generosity led to further restoration. About that time the church seems to have been much re-built, with the addition of the chancel, tower, and spire. In 1368 Sir William founded a second chantry, probably at the end of the south aisle, where a piscina may still be seen below the south window at the east end of the aisle. A similar piscina, now broken, is also to be found below the south window within the Communion rails. These piscinas were connected with the service of Mass in the Church of Pre-Reformation times. They were small sinks, with a channel leading to the ground on the outside, in a small niche of the wall on the south side of the altar, where the priest poured away the water used for rinsing his hands after the ablutions of the vessels and chalice used in the service of Mass. To each of the chantries Sir William appointed chaplains, so that at that period Crich church was served by a vicar and two chantry chaplains; while a chantry house for their accommodation was also erected in the town—the site of this chantry house unfortunately cannot be identified.

Richard Davy, the first chaplain appointed to a chantry by Sir William, died in 1370, and probably was buried in the coffin receptacle to be found in the outer north wall, near which, at that time, was a porch which, within the last two centuries, has been removed. Later, Crich inhabitants, however, made use of this grave for the remains of Thomas England, Vicar of Crich, who died in the year 1730—the stone lid at that time being reversed for the inscription relating to Thomas England. On Sir William's death, his sister Cecilia, wife of Sir John de la Pole, became his heiress, and from that time the Poles became patrons of the church. During these mediæval days the costliness and splendour of the vestments used in Crich church were exceptional, as we find from records of that period.

Crich church has had associations with families which have made history. In the floor of the north aisle is a stone with the title almost obliterated, marking the tomb of a member of the Babington family. Anthony Babington, of Dethick, was one of those implicated in the plot which had for its object the murder of Queen Elizabeth, an invasion of England from Spain, Mary Queen of Scots' release, and her accession to the English throne. The plot was discovered, and Babington, with several other conspirators, was found guilty of high treason, and executed in 1586. As a result of this plot, Mary was brought to trial, and was executed in the following year. In the earliest parish register there is a record of a Marmaduke Babington, who was buried in Crich church in the year 1587. Crich appears to have played a small but innocent part in this Babington plot. Anthony Babington, in order to raise the necessary funds for the successful carrying out of the plot, sold the whole of the tithes of Crich, of which he was then the owner, and certain estates, with the exception of two farms in Crich, which he retained himself, to John Claye, of Crich. When the plot was discovered, and Anthony Babington executed, his remaining estates, including the two farms in Crich, were forfeited to the Crown. The Crown awarded these two farms to Sir Walter Raleigh, who ultimately sold them.

Another famous lord of the manor of Crich was the brave John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, who lost his life during the course of the battle of Castillon, which saw the conclusion of the Hundred Years' War. We have seen that in the person of Sir William de Wakebridge, Crich was represented in the opening scenes of this war, and in the person of John Talbot, Crich was represented at the finish.

Another reminder of the association of the Earls of Shrewsbury with Crich, where they had large possessions, and also owned the neighbouring manor house and estate of South Wingfield, is to be found in the tomb on the south side of the chancel within the altar rails. This tomb bears the carved figure of a knight in full armour, resting his feet on a dog, and is inscribed to the memory of Godfrey Berresford, Esq., son and heir of Adam Berresford of Bentley, Esq., and servant to George, Earl of Shrewsbury. He died 29th Nov., 1513. Previous to the Restoration of 1861, this altar tomb was situated in the chancel

underneath the monument inscribed to David Woodhouse, Gent, and at this restoration was moved, as was also the alabaster tomb of John Claye, which previous to that date occupied a place in the chancel nearer the body of the Church.

Over the arch which divides the chancel from the body of the church, there were to be seen, as late as the year 1832, but at that time almost obliterated by the whitewash, which at times had been freely placed on the interior walls, two painted shields of arms belonging to the Earl of Shrewsbury and his wife, Elizabeth Hardwick.

Mention has already been made of a stone in the floor of the north aisle, near to the Wakebridge effigy, with the inscription almost obliterated, to the memory of Beatrice, eldest daughter of John Babington, of Dethick, and her husband Ralph Pole. An altar tomb to the memory of German Pole, a grandson of Ralph Pole, and his second wife, Margaret, who outlived him and afterwards married John Claye, of Crich, used to stand at the east end of the north aisle. In order to facilitate the placing of pews (not the present ones) in the church, this tomb was brought to the floor level. At the restoration in 1861 this present stone was removed to the chancel floor, but it was feared that in course of time the inscription would become obliterated. With a view to preserving it, a protecting board was placed over it. This, however, proved to be a "stumbling block" to so many persons, that the board was removed the stone again taken up, and fixed in its present position in the north wall of the chancel, close to the east end. The earliest register of Crich church contains a record of the death of Germanus Poole, who was buried April 26th, 1588.

Below this stone is an alabaster altar tomb to the memory of John Claye, who died in the year 1632, and his two wives—Mary, his first wife, daughter of William Calton, of Calton, Esq., chief cock matcher and servant of the hawks to Henry VIII., and widow of — Charnels, of Snareston, Esq., who died in 1583; and his second wife, Margaret, who was the widow of German Pole, Esq., mentioned above. The sides and end presented to view, show five kneeling figures, representing children of John Claye; over each is inscribed the name—1st, Susannah, 2nd, Mary, 3rd, Penelope nupta erat Thomas Brailsford Senior, and on the end William and Theophilus. From the old parish

register we learn that Theophilus was buried in the tomb of the Clays, beneath the Church, March 2nd, 1590. The inscriptions on this tomb of John Claye are now almost obliterated. This occurred during the early years of 1700, when Joseph Mather, who was permitted by the Churchwardens to hold school in the chancel, allowed his scholars to climb upon the tomb. The practice of using the church chancel for a day school was only discontinued during the early years of last century.

An examination of the north wall of the church on the inside, near the middle window, reveals some holes and a groove, which probably were plug holes for a screen, which is supposed to have reached across this aisle to the pillar opposite. It is highly probable that in mediæval times the two chantries were screened off from the body of the church, serving as separate chapels. When these screens were removed, and exactly where they stood, can now only be conjectured.

A screen, which formerly separated the chancel from the body of the church, was removed at the restoration in 1861. This was unfortunately cast out as useless, and ultimately found its way to a builder's yard at Derby, from whence it was rescued by the Vicar of St. Peter's, Derby, who purchased it and set it up in his own church, where it may be seen to-day. To this screen, when in this church, was attached, on the chancel side, the board referring to the Claye Family, now to be found on the north wall of the chancel. About the same time an old stoup, or stone vessel, for holding holy water, was also cast out in the churchyard. From there it was removed, and for fifty years graced the front garden of the house now owned by Mr. T. Dakin. However, through the generosity of Mr. Dakin, this has been restored.

In the vestry may be seen an old beam bearing the name of Thomas Shelmerdine, Minister, and his two Churchwardens. This was formerly one of the chancel beams, but when the roof was restored it was moved to its present position. Thomas Shelmerdine was the Presbyterian minister who held the living during the Commonwealth. A small brass tablet on the north wall of the chancel, quaintly inscribed, is to the memory of his infant son, who died and was buried in Crich. The inscription is as follows: "Noe sooner bloomed but blasted, Yet to revive with time at the refreshing. Ephraim Shelmerdine, March 1st, 1637."

The oak chest, with three locks, standing in the vestry is of great antiquity. In the Reformation, probably at the close of the reign of Henry VIII., inventories of the furniture and valuables in the churches and religious establishments were generally taken. In the Crich inventory mention is made of this chest, and of other things now lost. The small table is also of interest, as the wood used in its construction formerly formed part of the old Communion rails. Attention is drawn to the "poppy-head" seat, one of the original seats in the church. Previous to the Restoration in 1861, this seat stood near the pulpit, and was occupied by the Parish Clerk. To the uninitiated it may be explained that the term "poppy" is a form of "poupée," "doll," and an examination of the quaintly carved heads will explain the reason for the term "poppy-head," as applied to the seat. Another of the old seats, not a poppy-head seat, now stands in the belfry.

There is much in the chancel that is interesting. The present arrangement is different from that previous to the Restoration of 1861. The two altar tombs of Godfrey Berresford and John Clay, which now stand within the Communion rails, occupied places nearer the body of the church. The Communion rails, which now extend across the chancel, then formed three sides of a rectangle about the Communion Table, leaving a passage on each side reaching to the east wall.

The sedilia, or stone seats, in the south wall are characteristic of many cathedrals and churches erected previous to the Reformation. They are usually found, as in this case, three in number, and were for the use of the priest, the deacon, and sub-deacon, during part of the service of high mass. On the opposite wall is to be seen what appears to be a cupboard with a curiously carved door. When this door is opened a squint is revealed. This was originally an opening through the wall which enabled anyone within the vestry to obtain a view of the high altar.

Just above this cupboard recess is a stone lectern. This undoubtedly was connected with the Pre-reformed church service, and would be used at the reading of the Gospel during the service of Mass or Communion. An old hook—the use of which was problematical—was recently discovered in the wall, and is now carefully preserved amongst a few other relics of the past.

In the south window of the chancel, nearest the east end, may be seen a few fragments of the oldest coloured glass in the church—this is to be seen in the tracery—a small crowned head being distinguishable.

An examination of the priest's door, in the south wall of the chancel, reveals two deep socket holes in the wall. These were apparently intended for a stout bar, which, when in position, would effectually prevent the opening of the door to any outsider.

The large board on the north chancel wall is inscribed with a quaint epitaph, in which there is a continual play on the family name of Claye.

“Soules they are made of heavenly spirit :
 From whence they come ye heavens inh-rite,
 But knowe that b-odies made of Claye :
 Death will denounce by night or day.
 Yett is hee, as hee was I lay :
 Hee livinge and dead remaineth Claye.
 ——— that nature gave,
 Is now as shal be in his grave.
 Truies doth teache, experience tryes,
 That e aye to dust the winde updryes.
 Then this a wonder, count wee must,
 That want of winde should make Claye dust.”

On the chancel walls may also be seen a few tablets to the memory of former Crich residents. In the case of Captain German Wheatcroft, whose tablet may be seen on the north wall, there is an interesting story which is related here as it appeared in the Crich Parish Magazine.

“In the month of September, 1857, Captain German Wheatcroft, of the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons, went out to India to join his regiment. His wife remained in England, residing at Cambridge. On the night between the 14th and 15th November, 1857, towards morning, she dreamed that she saw her husband, looking anxious and ill; upon which she immediately awoke, much agitated. It was bright moonlight, and, looking up, she perceived the same figure standing by her bedside. He appeared in his uniform, the hands pressed across the breast, the hair dishevelled, the face very pale. His large dark eyes were fixed full upon her; their expression was that of great excitement, and there was a peculiar contraction of the mouth, habitual to him when agitated.

"She saw him, even to each minute particular of his dress, as distinctly as she had ever done in her life ; and she remembers to have noticed between his hands the white of the shirt-bosom, unstained, however, with blood. The figure seemed to bend forward, as if in pain, and to make an effort to speak ; but there was no sound. It remained visible, the wife thinks, as long as a minute, and then disappeared.

"Her first idea was to ascertain if she was actually awake. She rubbed her eyes with the sheet, and felt that the touch was real. Her little nephew was in bed with her ; she bent over the sleeping child and listened to its breathing ; the sound was distinct, and she became convinced that what she had seen was no dream. It need hardly be added that she did not again go to sleep that night.

"Next morning she related all this to her mother, expressing her conviction, though she had noticed no marks of blood on his dress, that Captain Wheatercroft was either killed or grievously wounded. So fully impressed was she with the reality of that apparition, that she henceforth refused all invitations. A young friend urged her soon afterwards to go with her to a fashionable concert, reminding her that she had received from Malta, sent by her husband, a handsome dress cloak, which she had never yet worn. But she positively declined, declaring that, uncertain as she was whether she was not already a widow, she would never enter a place of amusement until she had letters from her husband (if, indeed, he still lived) of a later date than the 14th November.

"It was on a Tuesday in the month of December, 1857, that the telegram, regarding the actual fate of Captain Wheatcroft, was published in London. It was to the effect that he was killed before Lucknow on the *fifteenth* of November.

"This news, given in the morning paper, attracted the attention of Mr. Wilkinson, a London solicitor, who had in charge Captain Wheatcroft's affairs. When at a later period this gentleman met the widow, she informed him that she had been quite prepared for the melancholy news, but that she had felt sure her husband could not have been killed on the 15th of November, inasmuch as it was during the night between the 14th and 15th that he appeared to her.

"The difference of longitude between London and Lucknow being about five hours, three or four o'clock a.m. in London would be eight or nine o'clock a.m. at Lucknow. But it was in the *afternoon*, not in the morning, as will be seen in the sequel, that Captain Wheatcroft was killed. Had he fallen on the 15th, therefore, the apparition to his wife would have appeared several hours before the engagement in which he fell, and while he was yet alive and well.

"The certificate from the War Office, however, which it became Mr. Wilkinson's duty to obtain, confirmed the date given in the telegram, its tenor being as follows :

"WAR OFFICE,

"30th January, 1858.

"These are to certify that it appears, by the records in this office, that Captain German Wheatcroft, of the 6th Dragoon Guards, was killed in action on the 15th of November, 1857.

(*Signed*) B. HAWES."

"Mr. Wilkinson called at the office of Messrs. Cox & Greenwood, the Army Agents, to ascertain if there were no mistake in the certificate. But nothing there appeared to confirm any surmise of inaccuracy.

"In the month of March, however, 1858, the family of Captain Wheatcroft received from a fellow officer a letter, dated from Lucknow on the 19th of December, 1857, informing them that Captain Wheatcroft had been killed, not on the 15th of November, as reported, but on the *fourteenth, in the afternoon*. This officer was riding close by his side at the time he saw him fall, struck by a fragment of shell in the breast, and never speaking after he was hit.

"The War Office finally made the correction as to the date of death.

"Thus the appearance of what is usually termed a Ghost, proved the means of correcting an erroneous date in the despatches of a Commander-in-chief, and in the certificate of a War Office."

Turning to the nave we find much that is of interest. An examination of the column of the arcades on the north side, nearest the chancel, reveals a portion of a curiously carved stone, underneath which is a piece of stone which has evidently formed part of the shaft of an ancient cross. These would probably be in-

and the opening up of the whole church, however, the congregation would probably find these entrances, from the elevated and exposed position of Crich church, conducive to too much fresh air and ventilation.

Beneath the floor of the church and chancel are vaults and graves occupied by those who lived and died in Crich during early and mediæval times. Unfortunately much real knowledge of their positions and occupants have been lost. The last burial beneath the floor of the church occurred about fifty years ago.

A writer, describing the church at the beginning of the last century, makes mention of a shield of arms, "Azure, two chevrons, Or," being the arms of the ancient family of Fitz Ralph, Lords of Crich, to be seen in the window at the east end of the north aisle. This window has been removed, and a window to the memory of the Rev. Wm. Chawner has taken its place. Unfortunately the shield of arms has disappeared.

The bells in the belfry are six in number, with a total weight of $48\frac{3}{4}$ cwt., and are dated 1616, 1626, 1671, 1721, 1771, and 1910—the latter bell having been presented to the church by Mr. Coupe. The bell dated 1771 is a re-cast bell; its previous date being 1583. In addition to these there is a small bell, rung just before service begins. This is probably the oldest of all, and may be the old sanctus bell that used to swing over the east gable of the nave—the flag staff lately set up on the church roof is fixed to its old support.

Over the porch may be seen the old sundial, which has seen many generations of worshippers pass beneath it—its actual age cannot exactly be determined.

The church registers date from the year 1564. The earliest of these registers has, of recent years, been restored to the church, from which it had long been absent, through the kindness of an antiquary, who discovered it amongst some old volumes he had acquired. He brought his find to the notice of Dr. Cox, who, from certain entries, concluded that it belonged to Crich church, and was instrumental in securing its return. Several of its leaves had become detached, and unfortunately are lost. All the entries are in Latin, and it is interesting to find there recorded the burials of Marmaduke Babington, Sep. 16th, 1587, German

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Poole, April 26th, 1588, and Theophilus Claye, March 2nd, 1590 ; the latter two names appearing on monuments still in the church.

This register records burials, baptisms, and marriages, which took place in the Church from 1564 to 1572. Several pages of the register are missing at this point, and then come entries from 1587 to 1593, when pages again have been lost. One of the earliest entries is of a marriage between Igomas Bardsley and Agnes Clarke, Oct. 1st, 1564.

In this register, which is not easily decipherable owing to the peculiar style of writing, appear, amongst other names, certain familiar Crich names of the present day—Amatt, Babington, Bunting, Curzon, Claye, Bryan, Smith, Radford, sometimes written Redfort and Redford, Flynte (Flint), Vallance, Daws (Daves), Wetton, sometimes written Wotton, Wylde, Poole, Redfern.

The register from 1600 to 1654 is fairly complete, but the entries on the parchment pages, from age and exposure, are now almost indecipherable. However, some of the entries at intervals may still be read, and names of Bollington, Bembridge, Ludlam, Haslam, Martyn (Martin), Piggin, Cowlshaw, Boamer (Bowmer), Sellers, Holmes, Allyn, Berrisford, Fritchley, Beardoh, Greener or Greenhough, appear.

This register is interesting as containing an entry of the baptism and death of "Ephraim Shelmerdine, the son of Thomas Shelmerdine, Vicker of Crich, 1637." Thomas Shelmerdine, it will be remembered, was the Presbyterian minister during the Commonwealth. A copy of the bequest of John Bradshaw, of Wheatcroft, to the poor of Crich, appears on the last page of this register, and is signed by "Thomas Shelmerdine, Vicker," and "John Haslam and John Smith, Churchwardens."

During the years 1654 to 1671, the register appears to have been very irregularly kept ; very few entries whatever were made, the few found being entered most erratically—the spirit of that time is well represented in the pages of this register. In 1671, the Reverend Joseph Topham became Vicar of Crich, and from that time to the present the registers are continuous.

Some of the entries in the earlier registers are quaint and interesting :

"Elizabeth, a poor child without settlement, was brought from Morwood and baptized at Critch, Feb. 10, 16 $\frac{27}{58}$."

"John Ronally, a poor stranger, who was servant to Wm. Burgin, of ye Chase, was buried Jan. 21, 16 $\frac{73}{74}$."

"John, ye sonn of George Robertson, of Tansley, was baptized by Mr. Thorn, ye Nonconformist Minister, Dec. 9, 1700."

"Sarah, ye servant to Anthony Sowter, of Tansley, of ripe years, after confession of faith, received the sacrament of Baptism, April 7, 1692."

"Joseph Barker and Sarah Britton, sojourners, married Oct. 1, 1739."

In the year 1752 an alteration in the calendar was made ; the new year, which had previously begun on March 25th, beginning Jan. 1st. A reference to this change, which was in accordance with an Act of Parliament, is to be found in the register of that date. This explains such an entry as Jan. 7, 17 $\frac{49}{50}$, found in old documents, and which presents a slight difficulty to the uninitiated—till March 25th the year was 1749, on that date began the year 1750. The entry of the death of one of the vicars is thus recorded—"Rev. Mr. England, Vicker of Crich, buried Feb. 9, 1739."

The office of parish clerk and sexton appears to have been held for nearly three hundred years by a member of the Wetton family, the last of whom, "John Wetton," died a few years ago.

An interesting reminder of the early days of Crich church is a parchment page of one of the church service books, in use before printing was introduced. It is a page out of one of the gospels, and the inscribed characters are, to-day, splendid in their form and colouring, giving a good idea of the beautiful work done in this direction by the early monks. This interesting relic is now in the possession of Mr. J. T. Lee, who may, perhaps, be persuaded to generously restore it to the church, where it should find an honoured place amongst other relics. Unfortunately this page is all that remains of books that, in their day, must have been of great value, and which, at the present time, would be far more valuable on account of their association with the early history of the church.

Crich church can boast a long list of former vicars and chantry chaplains, and, as might be expected, some eccentric characters have figured in the list. One of the most eccentric was the Rev. Thomas Cornthwaite, who was a bachelor, and vicar of Crich at the beginning of last century.

His eccentricities took various forms ; for some weeks in the summer months he migrated to Derby, and took lodgings in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's church, so that he might hear the chimes, of which he said he was very fond. In spite of his eccentricities, he seemed to have regretfully realised that his work in Crich was a failure, for it is related that on one occasion he took a pair of shoes to be soled, and on going to fetch them, which he did himself, some few doors from his own residence, asked how much the charge was. He then sat and mused for some time, turned the shoes over, and sadly exclaimed—"Well, Piggin, thou art cleverer than I ; thou hast made two new soles for one and tenpence, and I have been Vicar of this parish over forty years, and have neither made nor mended a soul yet."

On Sunday, Aug. 27th, 1837, this vicar of Crich delivered his farewell discourse to a numerous congregation, and the following account was afterwards published in a local publication.

"The Rev. Thomas Cornthwaite appeared to be much excited, and read the prayers in a very hurried manner. Without leaving the desk, he proceeded to address the flock for the last time, and the following is the substance thereof—

'To-morrow, my friends, this living will be vacant, and if any of you is desirous of becoming my successor, he has now an opportunity. Let him use his influence, and who can tell but he may be honoured with the title of Vicar of Crich. As this is my last address, I shall only say, had I been a blacksmith, or a son of Vulcan, the following lines might not have been inappropriate—

My sledge and hammer lie reclined,
My bellows, too, have lost their wind ;
My fire's extinct, my forge decay'd,
And in the dust my vice is laid.
My coal is spent, my iron's gone,
My nails are drove, my work is done ;
My fire-dried corpse lies here at rest,
And, smoke-like, soars up to be bless'd.

If you expect anything more, you are deceived ; for I shall only say—Friends, farewell, farewell !’

The effect of this address was too visible to pass unnoticed ; some appeared as if waked from a dream, and gazed upon each other in silent astonishment ; for others it was too powerful for their risible nerves to resist, and they burst out into loud fits of laughter, while one and all slowly retired from the scene to exercise their future congregations on the farewell discourse of their late pastor.”

The last restoration of the church, which was largely due to the energy and generosity of the Misses Hurt, occurred in the year 1861.

It has for some time been borne on the minds of the clergy, wardens, and sidesmen of the church, that something should be done to put the present fabric into a complete state of repair—in such a manner as not to destroy the ancient characteristics of the building—and to provide the church with an organ worthy of the building.

For such a purpose £1000, at least, would be necessary. Unfortunately, Crich parishioners are engaged almost entirely in agricultural pursuits and quarrying, and the wages earned are low—in the latter industry there has been a great falling off during late years, so that locally it is an utter impossibility to raise the above amount. For this reason, and in order that this church, which in the past has occupied such a position in the county, and done so much for those who are dead and gone, should not further decline, an earnest appeal is made for help, that the fabric may be restored and furnished in a manner worthy of its age and prestige.

