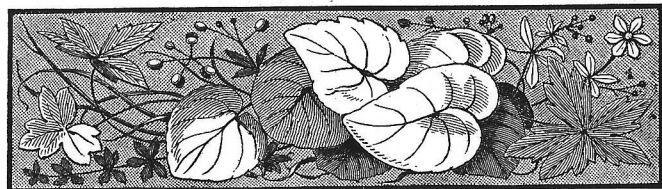


Transactions of Lancs. & Cheshire Antiquarian Society
1892



MOBBERLEY.

BY REV. H. LEIGH MALLORY, M.A.

SITUATE in the midst of the Cheshire plain, at about two hundred feet above the sea (in which respect it compares favourably with the neighbouring parishes), Mobberley enjoys a climate, which, for Cheshire at all events, may be regarded as rather bracing than otherwise. The annually increasing number of visitors who take lodgings at the farmhouses, in order to benefit by the purity and freshness of the air may be regarded as a fair gauge of the opinion entertained as to its healthiness.

Though not hilly the country is undulating, and there are many well-wooded vales through which the roads pass dipping down to cross over one or other of the three streams which traverse the parish at various parts. There is no lack of springs of excellent water throughout the whole district—the depth of the wells varying considerably—those, for example, near the station, being about twelve to fifteen feet, while those by the church reach as much as forty feet. The soil is for the most part rich and loamy with sandy subsoil—but in parts there are clay banks.

On the east side lies the well known bog called Lindow Common, from which turf is cut and used for fuel. In certain parts of this common the *Osmunda* fern is found. Here also is a large boulder-stone—supposed never to have been disturbed since the time it was deposited there thousands of years ago—formed of Eskdale granite. It measures four and three quarters feet by three and a quarter by one and a half. There are two other boulders of the same description near the church measuring four feet by three and a half by three, and two and a half by one and a half by half, respectively, also two others opposite the iron gates below the church, and one at the corner of the road by Sunny Bank Farm.

The trees in Mobberley are not of a very first-class order, being mostly hedgerow timber. The finest are a row of elms from the guide post to the Manor House, and the lime trees around the churchyard. The yew tree in the churchyard is of great size and age, and of a beautiful shape, it measures fifty-four feet in diameter and nine feet round the bole. There is one venerable oak about a mile and a half from the church, whence the farm near which it grows takes its name of the “Broad Oak Farm.”

Mobberley is rich in wild flowers—and some rare ones amongst them.

There are three kinds of heath, cranberry, and once a single plant of crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) was found on Lindow Common. Also on Lindow Common, *Andromeda polifolia* and a rare kind of rush called *Rhynchospora alba*, the round-leafed and the long-leafed sundew, Bog-asphodel, and *Viola palustris*, and a pretty little creeping plant called *Corydalis claviculata*.

Near the old farm of Orrell House the sawwort is to be found. Along the brook below the church the *Geum*

rivale is found, and on the clayland, *Chlora perfoliata* and *Erythrea centaurea*.

Ferns, *Polypodium dryopteris* and *Lastrea oreopteris* (the scented fern). Wall Rue grows on the Old Hall and at Antrobus Hall. In the Bollin Wood is plenty of *Paris quadrifolia*, and in many of the pits the Bladder wort is to be found; also in the Bollin Wood is found in large quantities the sylvan forget-me-not and *Campanula latifolia*.

There is also an unusual variety of wild birds, amongst others of the less common, the king-fisher, the yellow wagtail, the green woodpecker; a pair of gros beaks were seen one year in the garden of the Manor House, but have not since appeared.

The old corn mill, mentioned in Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*, as belonging in 1615 to George Talbot, of Grafton, and sold by him to Carrington, was for many years unused. About thirty years ago it was turned into a silk mill, and afterwards used for making the Albert crape. Three years ago it was vacated, and in 1891 was pulled down. In the seventeenth century there were several rope-walks, mostly attached to farmhouses. Mobberley wakes are held in October, on the Sunday nearest to the twelfth; but as holidays have become more frequent, and travelling easier, these anniversaries have become less important.

Mobberley is rich in old farmhouses of about the Tudor period, with stone corners and stone copings. Some of these have most beautiful oak panelling—as for example Saltersley, on the edge of Lindow Common; the Old Hall, now the residence of Mr. Ernest Leicester; Town Lane Hall; Antrobus Hall; and Duckinfield Hall. There are still a few ~~black~~ and-white houses and cottages remaining, with stone or ~~black~~ pitched roofs. At the east

side of the parish, about one and a half miles from the church, is a Quakers' burial ground, in which are grave-stones dating back to the seventeenth century. No burial has taken place here for fifty years. In the churchyard there are several interesting gravestones, some with quaint epitaphs. Just outside the wall, near the east end, are the stocks, still in very fair preservation.

In the north corner of the churchyard, near the lych gate, stood the old parish school. The site is notified by a memorial stone let into the wall close by. This school was pulled down in the year 1837. The present lych gate was designed by the late rector, Rev. George Mallory, and built by him of timber from the old school.

In the year 1206 a priory was built by Sir Patrick de Mobberley, where the manor house now stands, for regular canons of the order of St. Augustine, "In honour of God, and the Virgin Mary, and St. Wilfrid"—to abide and dwell for ever in the church of Mobberley. Sir Patrick appointed a canon of the order, one Walter, to be the first prior. This priory was annexed to the priory of Rocester, co. Stafford, about 1228, by Gilbert de Barton. There is a tradition that an underground passage still exists between the manor house and the church, but no trace of it has been discovered. The cellars in the manor house are old, vaulted, and built of ancient bricks.

The church of Mobberley has much of interest attaching to it. At a recent restoration, when excavating for the foundation of the chancel arch, old Saxon remains were discovered, doubtless the foundations of the former church. But, unhappily, there are no dates or records of that church.

The present church was built about 1245. The original structure seems to have had one continuous roof covering both the nave and chancel, and at that time the

aisles were much narrower and lower than at present; and there was an engaged tower, fragments of the north and south walls of which are still standing. Probably this tower fell into decay, for in 1533 the present tower was built, by John Talbot, of Grafton, and the church repaired. Whether there were pinnacles on the tower is exceedingly doubtful, though the seats for them were prepared. At the south-west corner of the tower running round the buttress is this inscription: "Orate pro bono statu domini Johannis Talbot militis et dominæ margaretæ uxoris suæ patronæ ecclesiæ Anno domini milesimo quingentesimo tricesimo tertio. Richard Plat master mason." The rood screen bears a date 1500—and has with other devices the arms of Talbot. In 1710 the royal arms were painted on plaster above it reaching to the roof and one table of the decalogue on either side. These were removed at the time of the last partial restoration, 1888-1889, when the chancel arch was built. At the same time the chancel and vestry were rebuilt, a new roof put on the chancel, which is an exact copy, and timber for timber, of the old one. Some of the sound timber from the roof was used for the principal parts of the pulpit, the panels being those of the old three-decker. When taking down the east end of the north aisle the beautiful window head was found amongst the rubble in the wall, which is now in the staircase of the heating chamber. There are a piscina and two sedilia. At one time it is probable there were three sedilia, the most easterly one being removed in order to make room for the south window in the sacrarium.

The shields in this window were formerly in the lights at the top of the east window. They are of great age, and represent the arms of persons who have been possessed of land in Mobberley, or held the living of

Mobberley, from the year 1206. At the east end of the south aisle is a memorial window to Hamon Leycester, who was rector of Mobberley 1462. Parts of the Latin inscription can still be deciphered: "Orate pro anima magistri Hamonis Leycester rectoris hujus ecclesiæ qui hanc fenestram fieri fecit anno domini 1492."

The monuments in the chancel are of some interest and antiquity: one to Dean Mallory, A.D. 1636, recording the sequestration of the living owing to his being one of the non-juring clergy; one to Mr. Stanley of Alderley, rector in 1664; and a very peculiar one to Elizabeth Robinson—well worthy of close investigation.—See Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*.

The bells are from one hundred to one hundred and twenty years old, and appear to have been given by Samuel Egerton, Esquire, of Tatton. They were cast at Gloucester Foundry, and are all inscribed. In 1891 two of the bells had worn through where the clapper struck them and had to be re-cast; and all the bells were re-hung at the same time. The following are the inscriptions on the bells:—

1. "Peace and Good Neighbourhood."
2. "S. Peacock Churchwarden.
Rudhall Fecit, 1792.
With louder tone again I ring,
To God's House all men to bring.
Samuel Hargreaves. Renovabit 1891.
G. Eden, J. Norbury. Wardens.
J. Taylor & Co. Founders, Loughborough."
3. "Thomas Ruddall, Gloucester. Founder 1779."
4. "Prosperity to this Parish, 1772."

5. "We were cast at the expense of Samuel Egerton, Esquire, 1772."

6. "I to the Church the living call,
And to the grave do summon all."

"Ring clearer than before
God's praises evermore.

E. of T. 1891."

The parish registers are of considerable interest, containing some quaint entries and memoranda. They date back to 1578.

