

## ST. LEONARD'S, BENGEO.

The Committee which has been called into existence for the purpose of conserving the old parish church of Bengoe, has deemed it advisable to ask Mr. William White, F.S.A., to pay a visit of inspection, and to give a report of the necessary repairs to maintain the fabric of the building in good condition. From his report, which will be read by very many with interest, and which the Committee have decided to adopt and carry out if possible, it will be seen that the necessary work will entail considerable expenditure, but we feel sure that they may now appeal with confidence to the public to assist them in their good work.

Donations will be thankfully received by the Rev. G. R. Thornton, Bengoe Rectory; and Messrs. G. E. Palmer (Secretary), and J. N. Troughton (Treasurer), Churchwardens, Bengoe.

1.—This church, apart from all local considerations or purposes of immediate utility, or from any old associations attaching to it, is one which ought to be preserved from ruin for the mere sake of its architectural and antiquarian interests.

2.—It consists of apsidal chancel  $23\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $19\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and nave 44 feet by 21 feet, a late south porch, and modern bell-cote at the west end.

3.—The walls, which are massive, are built of flint, and appear, in the chancel at any rate, to have been packed in wooden frames. This establishes their early character.

4.—The chancel arch, with its shafted jambs and quaintly cut capitals, is of the earliest Norman date, or more probably, as I think, from certain indications in the detail, of date prior to the Conquest. The chancel itself appears to be later than this. It is difficult to fix the date of the chancel, the inner arches of the windows being of round character, and the outer somewhat of the pointed, although they appear to be of the same date.

5.—At the commencement of the apse on the southern side a window of late character has been inserted—the wall being cut away and made good in an awkward manner to receive it.

6.—The roof of the chancel has been renewed to a lower pitch, with some of the old timbers re-used. It is now finished with a gable square, overhanging the round of the apse. It is finished inside with a flat ceiling, the main timbers of which appear to be of considerable age.

7.—The roof of the nave is old and is fairly sound, but is spreading somewhat at either end. It has been tied in the middle with an iron rod in lieu of the ancient oak beam.

8.—There are some good and interesting remains of mural painting, beneath several successive coats of other painting and intermediate colour-wash, both on the west side of the wall of chancel arch and in the chancel itself.

9.—In the conservation of the old building it would be desirable to re-tile the roofs, although the tiling is in a fairly sound condition.

10.—The timbers also are fairly sound, excepting that the wall-plate, resting on the middle of the wall, on to which the couples were notched, is quite gone, and several of the rafter couples are decayed.

11.—I consider it would tend to the permanent preservation of the roof to strip it and replace the several decayed timbers, covering the whole with a layer of counterjoists diagonally from eaves to ridge twelve inches apart to receive tiling battens; in lieu of the present filling in pieces which are not sufficiently strong for their bearing.

12.—The western gallery ought to be removed as being perfectly useless, and greatly injuring the character and general proportion of the building.

13.—Water drips through from the bell-cote on to some of the timber supports. These leaks should be made good with lead.

14.—It would be a great advantage both for its appearance and protection if the eaves of the bell-cote were continued so as to give a projection of eleven or twelve inches instead of about three or four inches.

15.—The floor should be swept out, and should have some making good done; but this is immaterial as regards preservation, except that a place left in a dirty, untidy state ceases to be cared for.

16.—The glazing of the windows should be renewed and protected with galvanised iron wire guards, as at present; but the guards should be half an inch on either side narrower than the glass line, and should have iron bars at spaces of twelve or fifteen inches apart for fixing them securely.

17.—The walling gable over the chancel arch is insecure and is sinking, in part probably from want of a tie in the roof at the gable, causing also the exterior walls to spread.

18.—This should be secured by means of a tie when the roof is stripped.

19.—There is a large cavity in the wall above, which should be filled in with flint work.

20.—The western wall, which is spreading at the south-east corner in the same manner and from the same cause, should be secured and the roof tied.

21.—A portion of the south-west quoin which has been tied with a perfectly useless iron strap should be rebuilt.

22.—It would be well to remove the plastering of the ceilings.

23.—The several coats of colourwash should be very carefully removed from the walls to show, so far as is possible, the remains of the original painting.

24.—The repair of the interior plastering is quite immaterial in respect of conservation.

25.—Externally I consider that the plastering on the walls, which is going rapidly to decay in almost every part, should be removed, and the walls well raked and pointed with strong Has lime mortar, several defective places being cut out and pinned in with new work.

26.—The footings to be especially examined and filled in.

WILLIAM WHITE, F.S.A.

June 6, 1879.