

A HISTORY OF HAMPSHIRE

ASHMANSWORTH

Æscmeresworth (x cent.) ; Esmeresworda, Esshermeresworth, Ashmeresworth (xiii cent.); Ashmansworth (xviii cent.).

The parish of Ashmansworth lies west of East Woodhay, the greater part of the land lies high and there is very little woodland. A belt of trees forms part of the western boundary, while within the parish are Privet Copse and Buckhanger Copse in the north, Codley Copse north-west of the village, and Sidley Wood in the south.

The village itself consists mainly of a few farms; Manor Farm, Steel's Farm, and Porter's Farm are north of the church, while south of it are Church Farm and Lower Manor Farm. The school, which is not far from Manor Farm, was built in 1872, and the Methodist chapel, near by, in 1888.

Several chalk-pits are scattered about the parish, which has a heavy soil with a subsoil of chalk. The chief crops are wheat, oats and turnips. There are 1,003 acres of arable land, 282 acres of permanent grass and 94 acres of woods and plantations,¹ and the total acreage of the parish is 1,821 acres

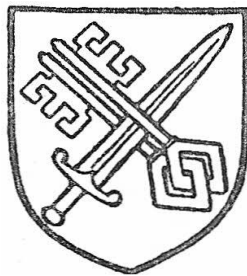
Some place-names of interest are Downlanger, Mowshold, Hyther, Boccambe Downe, a close called Gallycoop and Hardyngs Croft (1725).²

When the church was restored in 1900 some fragments of Roman urns and pottery were discovered.

ASHMANSWORTH, which was MANOR granted as part of Whitchurch to the church of Winchester for the maintenance of the monks by Earl Hemele, was subsequently appropriated by the Bishop of Winchester, but was restored to the church by Edward of Wessex in 909.³

In 934 King Athelstan confirmed the church of Winchester in possession of ten cassates at Ashmansworth 'ad refectorium fratribus et ad vestimenta,' directing that this land should be under the management of the bishop.⁴

The prior and convent, however, had lost all their right to the manor by the 13th century, Ashmansworth being entirely in the bishop's hands⁵ in 1208-9 and mentioned in the general confirmation of his manors made by Edward I in 1284.⁶



See of Winchester.
Gules St. Peter's keys
crossed with St. Paul's
sword.

It remained among the possessions of the bishopric until 1649,⁷ when it was sold to Obadiah Sedgwick,⁸ 'minister in Covent Garden,' who on his death in March 1654-5 left it by will to his son Obadiah, 'together with the piece of guilt plate with the cover

which the king and queen of Bohemia gave unto mee.'⁹ In 1660, however, the manor, like Ecchinswell (q.v. in Kingsclere), evidently returned to the bishop¹⁰ -and passed in the late 18th or early 19th century to the Herbert family, by whose representative the Earl of Carnarvon it is now held.

The church of ST. JAMES^{10a} consists CHURCH of a chancel 27 ft. 8 in. by 15 ft. 1 in. and a nave 31 ft. 8 in. by 21 ft. 6 in., with a south porch and a wooden bell-turret over the west end.

The history of the church begins about the middle of the 12th century, to which date the nave belongs. The chancel, judging by its north windows, dates from the end of the same century. Windows have been inserted at various dates and the east wall was rebuilt in 1745.

The east window of the chancel, which has a wooden frame and dates from 1745, is blocked inside. The north wall of the chancel contains two round-headed windows of chalk masonry, now much weathered; they are tall and narrow, with an external rebate, the internal jambs showing vertical tooling, and are probably not much earlier than 1200. In the south wall are two much repaired pointed lancets of c. 1220, and beneath the eastern of the pair a plain recess in which is the head of a 12th -century pillar piscina, and a second and larger recess with a segmental head.

The second window has lost its rear arch, a flat lintel taking its place. Near the west end of this wall is a doorway which has old square jambs and a segmental head, the external masonry being much patched and decayed. The chancel arch is round-headed, a little distorted by settlements, and is of a single square order with a grooved and chamfered abacus at the springing and a beaded and chamfered base. On either side is a squint which has been cut at a later date, the wall over them being only carried by thin wood lintels, and their sides have been patched with brickwork. In the gable above the chancel arch is a small splayed opening now boarded up on the east side.

The two two-light windows in the north wall of the nave are 17th-century work and have wooden frames. Below the second of these, which is high up, is an original but much damaged doorway with a plain semicircular head and square jambs. It is blocked and its outer arch seems to have been rebuilt, a relieving arch of tiles showing in the wall.

In the south wall of the nave near the east end is a 14th-century window of two trefoiled lights, to the west of which at the top of the wall is a small square light, with wooden lintels, of uncertain date. The south doorway is quite plain and has a chamfered arch and the porch dates from 1694.

bishopric as late as 1723, when a John Stevens was reeve of the manor (Eccl. Com. Ct. R. 159462).

^{10a} But formerly St. Nicholas, as appears from the wills of John Yedele, 1427, and William Cole, 1553.

¹ Statistics from Bd. of Agric. (1905).

² Eccl. Com. Ct. R. 159462.

³ Kemble, *Cod. Dipl.* v, 174. The boundaries of Aescmereswardet are given in this charter.

⁴ Ibid. v, 215.

⁵ H. Hall, *Pipe R. Bp. of Winton* (1208-9), 10.

⁶ *Cas. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, p. 274.

⁷ *Pope Nich. Tax.* (Rec. Com.), 215b ; Mine. Aceta. 1141.

⁸ Close, 1649, pt. xviii, no. 7.

⁹ P.C.C. Will 20 Wootton.

¹⁰ It appears on the court rolls of the

In the West wall is a modern window of two trefoiled lancets. The internal jamb and part of the rear arch are, however, old, probably of 14th century date. Two consecration crosses remain in the plaster on the north wall of the nave and two on the South.

The Chancel has a plastered segmental ceiling and the Nave a roof with modern boarding, but with old moulded plates and two tie beams, which have large pendant bosses at their centres, one carved with a rose and leaves and the other with a rose between four lions' heads. At the west end the bell-cote is supported, by four large posts set against the walls.

The Font has been recut to its present form within memory, but is old, perhaps of the 12th century. A good deal of wall painting was found on the walls of the Chancel in 1887, but all is now covered up by colour wash except a small piece between the two north windows, which consists of the upper portion of a figure and is said to represent St. ANNE. It is of very good style, in red outline, but is now much faded.

A note published in the Newbury Weekly News, of the 3rd Nov. 1887, describes the principal figure as being on the left splay of the north window, representing a Saint in vestments in the attitude of adoration of another figure.

During some restorations in 1900 more paintings were discovered in the nave. Over the Chancel arch are the remains of a Doom, with blank spaces for the rood, Our Lady and St. John, and below, and partly behind a 17th century tie beam, are two tiers of subjects of earlier style which have been identified as a Harrowing of Hell and the Day of Pentecost. There are the lower portions of three nude figures and on the right hand side are remains of what appears to be a dragon's wings and other small human figures. These fragments have been partly hidden by later work, probably of the 17th Century, which is continued lower down and also continue in patches on the north and south walls of the nave. The Royal arms, probably of Charles II are painted over the Chancel arch on canvas.

Between the two windows of the north wall of the nave is part of a 15th century painting, a man in a red and white robe; the right arm and hand are visible but the head is gone. There was an inscription above, and some drapery near the shoulders of the man shows that it is St Christopher with the child Christ.

There are three bells in the turret, the first being inscribed "God be our guyd 1588"; the second, "Samuell Knight of Reading made mee 1692"; and the third; "Robert Wells, Aldbourne 1780".

The Chalice, Paten and Arms dish belonging to this Church are Sheffield plate.

The registers commence at 1810, all those previous to this date have been burnt.

Ashmansworth was formerly a Chapel dependent on the church of East Woodhay, which was in the gift of the Bishop of Winchester. The two Churches were separated at the time of the Reformation, but were united again some time early in the 18th century. In 1884 a Vicar was appointed to Ashmansworth, and since it has been a separate Vicarage in the gift of the Bishop of Winchester.