

ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF  
DORCHESTER.<sup>1</sup>

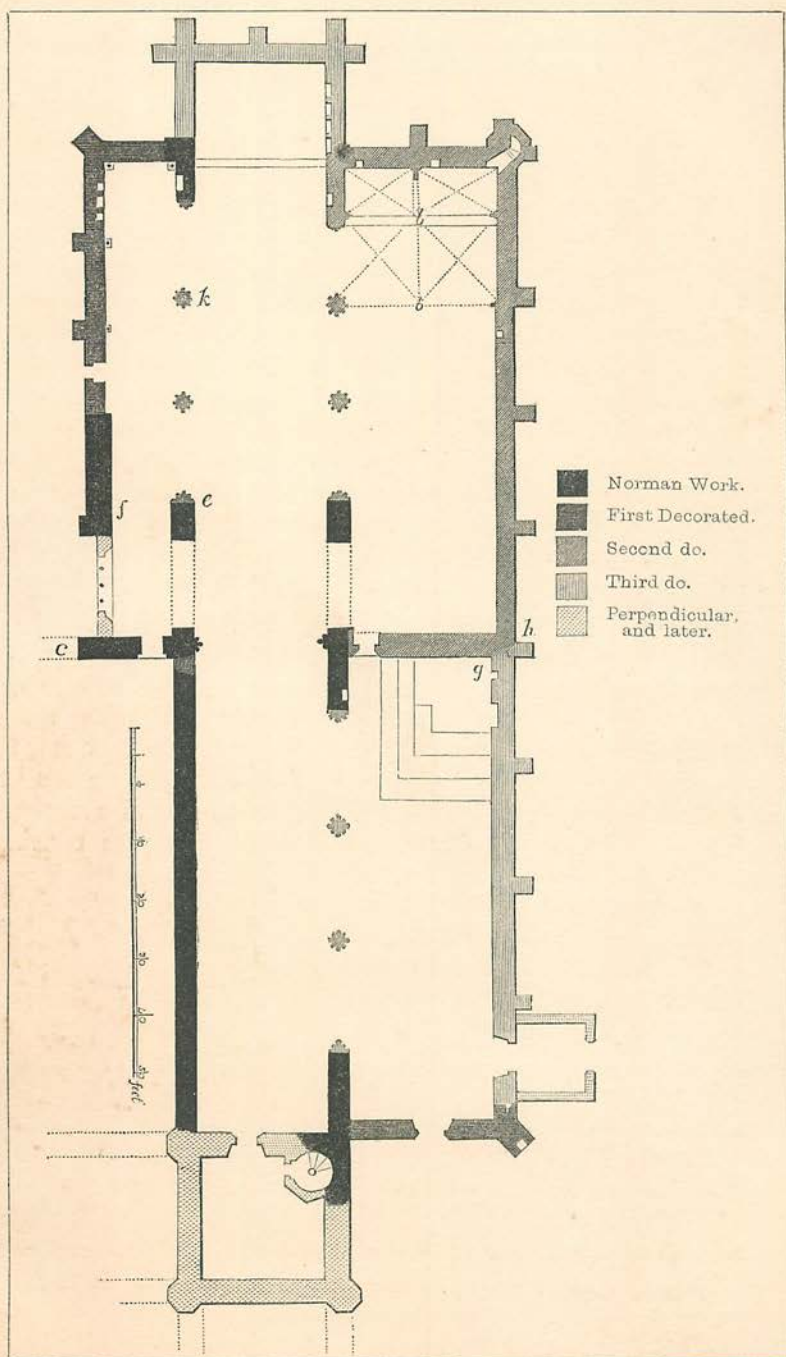
NEXT to the monuments of ancient art which our University itself contains, and second to none even of them, if we except the Cathedral and perhaps Merton Chapel, we may fairly rank, among the architectural remains coming within the scope of the present meeting, the Abbey Church of Dorchester. Its great size, its historical associations, its treasures of detail, conspicuous equally for rarity and beauty, form a combination of attractions surpassed by few existing buildings. And though to grace of outline and justness of proportion it can lay no claim whatever, yet this very deficiency forms a new ground of interest. What is lacking in beauty is made up in singularity, its ground-plan and general character being nearly unique among churches of the like extent and ecclesiastical dignity. Had I addressed you on this subject a year ago I should probably have said altogether unique, instead of nearly; but the investigations which during that period it has been my good fortune to make among the little known and greatly undervalued architectural remains of South Wales, have revealed to me more examples bearing a

<sup>1</sup> The first and third sections of the following paper, or at least the greater part of them, were read at a meeting of the Architectural Section of the Institute at Oxford. The substance of the second was delivered as an extemporary lecture at Dorchester, to a large body of members of the Institute. The two other sections are printed nearly as they were read; some parts of the second I have recast, to enable me to introduce several suggestions of importance made by Sir Charles Anderson, the Rev. J. L. Petit, the Rev. W. B. Jones, Mr. J. H. Parker, and others. Wherever it was possible, I have formally mentioned my obligations to those gentlemen; but, in many cases, their remarks were so mingled up with my own observations of which they were modifications, or with further inferences of my own to which they led, that it would be almost impossible to disentangle the component parts of the theories in which they

resulted. I have also especially to thank Mr. Parker for communicating some observations subsequently made by Professor Willis. Anything proceeding from such an authority is so valuable that I trust the Professor will excuse my having thus availed myself of them without formal permission. I was also extremely pleased to find that while the Professor's inquiries explained several points of difficulty, and threw doubt on a few minor portions of my view, they completely coincided with my theory of the history of the building, in all its essential features.

I am extremely pleased to find that the money now in the hands of the Treasurer of the Architectural Society, owing to a collection made on the spot, and to other sources, is sufficient to extend some measure of repair to the north aisle; at all events, to put some of the beautiful windows into a state of safety.

DORCHESTER ABBEY CHURCH, OXFORDSHIRE.



Ground Plan.

greater or less analogy to the subject of our inquiry than all my previous inquiries in other parts of England.

It is to these peculiarities to which I would now more especially draw the attention of the Institute. Dorchester Church was a few years back made the subject of an elegant volume published by the Architectural Society of this University. In that work two branches of the subject have been completely exhausted; every document and historical reference bearing upon the vicissitudes of the city and abbey has been carefully brought together; and the architectural details of the building have been described and engraved with the greatest minuteness, and, in almost every case, with the greatest accuracy. What is left for me on the present occasion is happily just what is most agreeable to my own taste, a general survey of the church regarded as a whole, and of its several parts as specimens of successive styles of architecture; to which I may add an attempt to trace out the successive steps by which the building assumed its present form, from its foundation in the twelfth century to the great work of restoration commenced in the nineteenth.

The history of Dorchester, its extensive Roman antiquities, its important place in the early ecclesiastical history of England, form no part of my present subject. Obscure as the place may now seem, there was a time when it was the seat of one of our greatest bishoprics, the fellow of Canterbury and York and Winchester. But those times had passed away before the present fabric, or even the foundation to which it belonged, had any existence. The present church can hardly be considered as in any sense the representative of that ancient Cathedral which was the mother church of a diocese extending, it is said, for a brief space over the whole of Mercia and Wessex. No portion of the present building is older than the translation of the see to Lincoln in the time of Lanfranc, or even than the re-establishment of the church in 1140 by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, as a Monastery of Black Canons.

#### § 1.—*General Characteristics of the Building.*

The most striking point about the church is that, notwithstanding its great size, and ecclesiastical rank, it has in no respect the architectural character of a

Outline and  
Ground Plan.

minster. In what that character consists, it is hard to say, but very easy to feel;<sup>2</sup> but it is clear that it is not possessed by Dorchester Abbey, while it is possessed in its fulness by many churches of the same, or even a much smaller size. We have the phenomenon of a church which, by its dimensions, might rank with Romsey and Bath, which not only is not cruciform, but which has no clerestory in any part of its length of above two hundred feet. From this it is clear that it does not so much as resemble a parish church even of the second order, much less such vast piles as Boston and St. Michael's, Coventry, which exhibit the parochial type on what I cannot but consider as an exaggerated scale. Dorchester is, in fact, a church of the very rudest and meanest order, as far as outline and ground-plan are concerned, developed to abbatial magnitude, and adorned with all the magnificence that architecture can lavish upon individual features. A nave with a single south aisle, a choir with an aisle on each side, a projecting presbytery, and a low and massive western tower, constitute the whole building. The length is unbroken by tower or transept; within, triforium, clerestory, and vault, are unknown. That such a pile is beautiful, few will argue; but it is strange, and awful, and solemn in the highest degree; and the inquirer might go far enough before he finds anything to surpass the consummate beauty of the choir arcades, or which, for singularity at least, if not for elegance, can be compared with the vast and wonderful east window which now again terminates the whole vista in renovated grandeur.

I remarked above that, though England has hardly any building which can be compared with this abbey, several examples, more or less analogous, may be found in Wales. There are not wanting points of resemblance between it and Llandaff Cathedral, as I have drawn out at some length in the remarks I have lately put forth on that church. And I have there remarked that where a church was, like Dorchester, at once parochial and conventual, it was not uncommon for the parochial element to prevail, and to give most of its character to the whole building.<sup>3</sup> This is not uncommon in England, and still more frequent in Wales. Since I wrote

<sup>2</sup> See the Builder for 1852, p. 4, 117.

<sup>3</sup> Architecture of Llandaff Cathedral, p. 9.

that account, I have seen a Welsh church which illustrates those remarks more fully than any with which I was then acquainted, and which affords a closer parallel to Dorchester than any other building that I have ever seen or heard of.

This is the Priory church of Monkton, in the suburbs of Pembroke, which really, in point of general effect, may be considered as Dorchester adapted to the ruder architecture of the district. The village churches of South Pembrokeshire are highly interesting ; though of the rudest character, they are always pleasing, often from their varied and picturesque outlines, always from their strange and slender towers, half fortresses, half campaniles. Within they are indeed possessed of the finish which is ordinarily denied to English village churches ; they are very generally vaulted with stone, but the vaulting is of such a character as only to produce fresh rudeness, giving the interior in many cases the appearance of a cavern rather than a church. Aisles are rare, and when they occur, the arcades are commonly of the roughest kind. In Monkton Church we have this type, adapted, one would have thought, only to the smallest and meanest chapels, developed to conventual proportions. If Dorchester, instead of the complicated ranges of arcades and clerestory usual in churches of its size, has merely aisles with distinct roofs, Monkton goes yet further ; it is without aisles at all, a mere nave and choir, with, as is not unusual in the district, a single transept. I did not measure the building, but to judge from the eye, it must be full a hundred and fifty feet long, Dorchester measuring about two hundred. A long dreary nave, as rough as those of the rudest village churches, with hardly a single window in its north side, remains as the parish church ; beyond this is a choir, now roofless, and deprived of all its ornamental work ; this must have been, when perfect, a fine specimen of Decorated architecture, but it is still only a parochial chancel on a large scale. The outline is more varied than that of Dorchester, as the tower, one of the ordinary Pembrokeshire type, is placed, as is not uncommon, at one side, in this case the south, being matched on the north by the transept now destroyed. A large ruined chapel stands close to the choir on the north side, looking from the south-east like an aisle to it, but having in reality distinct walls, and no direct communication with it, much

like the Lady Chapel at Ely, or the present chapter-house of St. David's.<sup>4</sup>

This church is, on the whole, the nearest parallel I know to Dorchester; and, allowing for the difference between Oxfordshire and Pembrokeshire, it may be thought a very exact one. Both were at once conventual and parochial—that the choir of Dorchester has not shared the fate of that of Monkton, or a worse, is due to an individual benefactor of the sixteenth century—in both the parochial element has swallowed up the conventual. The latter character is shown only in increased general size, and in the especially large proportions of the choir; in both it is merely the rudest type of village church which has swelled to this gigantic scale; so far from acquiring the character of a minster, it does not even approach to that of a large parish church.

That this fact diminishes from the positive beauty of these individual buildings requires no proof. Yet in the case of Dorchester the fact is far from being one to be regretted. If it were merely that the failure of these attempts to construct a large church on the plan of a small one, teach us more forcibly than anything else the totally distinct character of the two types, the gain would be no slight one either for the theory or the practice of ecclesiastical architecture. But besides this, and besides the interest and pleasure called out by what is strange and unique, as well as by what is more strictly beautiful, the effect of this peculiar character of Dorchester Church on its individual portions is well worthy of our attention. We shall find that the very arrangements which detract from the beauty and just proportions of the whole greatly conduce to the striking appearance, sometimes even to the actual beauty, of individual parts. I will proceed to mention two or three illustrations of this, reserving the strongest case for the last.

For instance, the south view of the church is exceedingly imposing; the long extent of wall, broken only  
South View.
 by the buttresses, and by the large and lofty windows, forms, meagre as is the tracery of the latter, one of the most striking ranges in existence. An extreme preponderance of any dimension, especially of length, is

<sup>4</sup> From remains of arches and vaults against the north wall of the choir to the west of this chapel, it appears that con-

ventual buildings were attached to the church at this point.

always effective, even when not actually commendable. This is here gained by throwing the aisle of the nave and that of the choir into one unbroken range. The effect is better from their being thus unbroken ; mark the commencement of the choir by any difference of height or breadth, and the charm would be lost ; the ideas of vastness and unity presented by the present arrangement would be shattered, and the mere disproportionate excess of length would stand out in its natural deformity. The break produced by the interposition of a transept promotes the effect of unity, that effected by difference of size does quite the contrary. But besides the unbroken length, the unbroken height is to be taken into account. The absence of a clerestory, while it detracts nothing from the real grandeur of the effect of length, does in a manner correct the disproportion. I need not go about to show how the whole appearance would be marred if the height of the wall were divided between an aisle and clerestory, and cut up into two ranges of little windows. In such a case the excess of length which now disarms criticism by its bold and striking effect, would amount to a simple deformity. The present arrangement then secures this effect in its fulness ; it also produces a magnificent range of windows and buttresses, which, under any other circumstances, could only have occurred in a church of much greater positive size.

The east end again, whether strictly beautiful or not, is striking and majestic in the highest degree.  
East End. Now this also could hardly have assumed its peculiar character consistently with any other general arrangement of the church. For instance, if the choir had been vaulted, this superb window could never have possessed its present proportions, and any change in its proportions would at once destroy its whole character. The main idea of the east end, within and without, is clearly that it should be one mass of tracery, divided by the central buttress, which may very probably answer a constructive purpose, and which most certainly serves to enhance the effect of vastness. In no way could this be effected except by the forms of arch and gable employed ; with no other could so great an extent of wall have been occupied by the window. This hardly need to be shown at greater length. Now if the choir were vaulted, the window would lose about

a third of its height ; its proportions would thus be rendered intolerable, the width becoming excessive ; the present arrangement would have to be deserted. Externally also the window would no longer be the whole that it now is ; if the roof were high, there would be a gable window, turning it into a composition in stages, and destroying the whole unity of effect ; if it were low, besides the general loss in appearance, a spandril would remain a great deal too large for the animating idea of the design.

Again, the large projecting bay forming the presbytery, with the great windows on each side, is in itself a striking object, and greatly helps to set off the east window. Were it not thus recessed from the choir, but placed level with the eastern responds, half its grandeur would be gone. On the other hand it is no less clear that a very much deeper recess would tend to spoil the effect equally the other way. Now a little consideration will show that no other arrangement could so well have admitted of a recess of this particular size. If the choir had been designed on the usual plan with a clerestory, and such a recess been introduced, this bay must have had on each side either a blank space or a small window beneath the clerestory range, the bad effect of which may be estimated from the similarly recessed eastern bay in the Cathedral ; or, if large windows like the present had been introduced, the change of design in a single bay, not forming a distinct addition, like a Lady Chapel, would have been far from pleasing. But with the present quasi-parochial arrangement, the recessed bay is introduced without any difficulty, and indeed actually improves the outline. It gives, as I have just said, great additional internal majesty, and externally I think it is clear that the peculiar character of the east window would not have been so well carried out, had the addition of aisles made it merely a part of a front.

In like manner, the peculiar arrangement of the south choir aisle, another of the striking characteristics of the church, would have been altogether inadmissible in a building of the ordinary type. This portion of the fabric is even now extremely effective, though it has lost very much, both within and without, by its high gable having been destroyed, and its contemplated vaulting never having been

South Aisle of  
Choir.



completed. This choir aisle is fully as large in every dimension as the choir alone, without the later addition of the presbytery; in breadth I think it exceeds it. It forms in fact a sort of second church of itself, and can in nowise be regarded as an ordinary aisle, a mere accessory and subordinate to the choir. Now whether this be or be not either justness of architectural proportion or propriety of ecclesiastical arrangement, it is beyond all question a source of extraordinary effect. The appearance of spaciousness produced is wonderful. But it is clear that such a structure as this could not have been introduced into an ordinary Cathedral or Conventual Church, without interfering in an unpleasant manner with its unity of design; once granting the peculiar arrangement of Dorchester Church, this was by far the most majestic form that it could have received. The absence of a clerestory involves a distinct roof to the aisle; how necessary this is may be shown by looking at the north aisle of this very choir, where the low wall and steep lean-to roof are only adapted to an edifice furnished with a clerestory. As the south aisle is rather the later of the two, the architect may reasonably be supposed to have taken warning by this failure. He built then his aisle with a distinct gable; but, once give an aisle a distinct gable, and its character is altogether changed; it is no longer the mere adjunct, dependent upon the larger building to which it is attached, and as it were crouching under its shadow: it at once assumes a character of independence, and must be treated accordingly. The builder at once grasped this idea; he gave his aisle the full dimensions of the choir, and we see what a majestic structure is the result.

And we may remark the pains taken to prevent the east ends of the presbytery and the aisle from presenting a double of each other. I am not here speaking with perfect historical exactness, as the present east end of the presbytery is later than that of the aisle; consequently whatever commendation is due on this score belongs to the architect of the former. There is a certain analogy between the two, so strong, that the earlier probably suggested the later; still there is a remarkable diversity, amounting even to contrast. In both there is an attempt to occupy the whole space, but in quite different ways; in the one it is by actually filling it up with an expanse of tracery; in the other by scattering distinct windows over its surface. In both we find the central buttress; but, while

in the presbytery it divides a single vast window, in the aisle it is placed between two of smaller size.

This arrangement is in fact only the greatest development of one by no means unusual in the smaller churches of the neighbourhood, during both the Early English and Decorated styles.<sup>5</sup> A west front is often found consisting of a buttress running up between two small windows, either single lancets as at Ellesfield, or small two-light windows as at Wilcot and Clifton Hampden. The form is adapted only to a front without a tower, the buttress naturally running up to support a bell-cot. That at Wood-Eaton has suffered much by the subsequent addition of a tower. A similar front occurs at Wantage, but it is less pleasing, being carried out, without modification, on a scale much larger than that for which it is adapted. Besides that the buttress prevents the presence of a doorway, which the west front of a large cruciform church clearly demands, the windows, running up into the gable, just as in the smaller examples, leave an unpleasant space unoccupied below.<sup>6</sup>

The Wantage example failed from the architect not modifying the form to the requirements of its position. The designer of that at Dorchester succeeded by adapting the idea suggested by the village west fronts to the necessities of much larger dimensions, and an eastern position. In an east end his buttress was not required to support a bell-cot; to carry it up far into the gable without such a purpose would have been both useless, and, as that at Wantage proves, æsthetically displeasing. Several small east ends occur,<sup>7</sup> though I am not aware of any in the neighbourhood of Oxford, in which an arrangement is followed similar to the Oxfordshire west ends, except that the central buttress is finished much lower down, and a quatrefoil or similar figure pierced in the gable. In the east end at Dorchester, from its greater size, something of this kind is still more imperatively demanded. The width required much larger windows, and larger windows could not possibly run into the gable; they must, together with the central buttress,

<sup>5</sup> See the author's *History of Architecture*, p. 358. This localism has been judiciously followed in the new chapel of Cuddesden Palace. Local peculiarities are too commonly neglected by modern architects.

<sup>6</sup> For the first suggestion of the analogy between Dorchester and Wantage I have to thank the late President of Trinity.

<sup>7</sup> See the author's *Essay on Window Tracery*, p. 6.

terminate at a point not higher than the level of the side walls. It follows then that some third figure must occupy the gable, just as in the smaller examples just mentioned. Unfortunately the gable has been destroyed, so that we cannot recover the exact nature of the original arrangement. But certainly that best adapted to the position would be a single window, rather smaller than those below, and forming a triangle with those below. The front would thus exhibit, in a later style, and on a larger scale, the same principle as the west end of Llanbadarn-fawr in Cardiganshire, or the east end of Barming in Kent. That such *was* the original composition, I will not positively affirm; I only say that it would be much the most appropriate one, and that I cannot think that the small square-headed openings on each side, at all prove that it was not really that employed.

Now within it is clear that such a composition would not have the same good effect as without; a gable window is something essentially external, in no wise calculated to form any part of an inside view; if it were merely because, in a building of this size, it proclaims itself as being over a vaulted or other ceiling. Hence, instead of the high-pitched open roof, rendered necessary in the choir by the nature of its east window, the aisle must be vaulted, so as to exclude the gable composition. But it would be hard to find any of the ordinary forms of vaulting which would appropriately cover so wide a space with two windows at the end. Something would have been wanting in the head, which the external arrangements could not have permitted; and it may be doubted whether, with any sort of roof, the two windows, side by side, with no such provision as the buttress provides without, could ever have been an agreeable arrangement.<sup>8</sup> This difficulty was avoided by using a single bay of sexpartite vaulting—sexpartite at least as far as the east wall is concerned—over the eastern bay; by this means flatness is avoided, and no space left unoccupied, each window fits into its own cell, and the vaulting-shaft runs up between them within, just as the buttress does without. The arrangement is the same which is adopted, and apparently for the same reason, over the eastern bay of the choir of St. Cross. We can there judge of its actual effect, and, though decidedly open to the objection that it is a sort of mimicry of an

<sup>8</sup> See the next note.

apsidal termination, yet it is clearly the best design that could have been adopted under the circumstances ; the best internal finish for a front divided into *two* vertical compartments. At Dorchester, however, as I said before, the vaulting unluckily has never been completed, so that we have nothing beyond the arches traced out for it. Its general effect one can of course pretty well appreciate, but one would wish to know how one point would have been managed. The vaulting system extends only over the two eastern bays, there being no traces of it whatever in the western part of the aisle. It is difficult to understand how the vaulted and vaultless divisions can have been harmonised together, as there is no trace of any arch between them. It follows of course that a void space must have been left above the vaulting at its west end, which must have been unpleasing, whatever means might have been taken to fill it up. There is a somewhat similar one in Ely Cathedral, where it is filled up with tracery ; and, though of much smaller extent than this at Dorchester would have been, the effect is by no means satisfactory.<sup>9</sup>

In all these cases the peculiar character of the building has allowed, and sometimes even required, the introduction of individual features of unique character and extreme splendour, for which no place could have been found in a church designed upon either of the ordinary types. We have finally to observe the most remarkable instance of all, in which, what in a general criticism of the building we must consider a defect, proves the means of introducing a feature which, in its own class, is very nearly unrivalled. The extreme splendour of the arches on each side of the

<sup>9</sup> I have left the above passage as it was written originally, as it expresses the view which I think would, at first sight, occur to any one, and the criticism it contains appears to be, in its main features, a just one. I must, however, state a suggestion made to me by Sir Charles Anderson, which, I am now convinced, contains the true solution of the whole matter. He remarked that the appearance of the springing of the transverse arch from the first pillar across the aisle (marked *a* in the ground-plan) is such that it could hardly have been that of on-spanning the whole aisle. He conceives then that the system of vaulting included two pillars (at *b b*) so that it would consist of four bays

of quadripartite vaulting, the eastern pair being much the narrower. Each of the altars, which doubtless occupied the east end, would thus have stood under its own distinct vault ; and at the west end would have been a complete couplet of arches, such as forms the entrance into several Lady Chapels, so that the difficulty of connecting the two forms of roof would not occur. But as the vaulting was clearly never added, it is very possible that these pillars were not really erected ; or, if they were, it is probable that they would be removed as incumbrances, whenever the intention of vaulting was finally surrendered. An examination of the foundations might probably settle the question.

choir must strike every one who contemplates them even in an engraving, much more in all the majesty of their actual presence. Their beauty is not at all derived from mere ornament, for, though all their detail is well and elaborately wrought, and the section of the arch-mouldings is very complicated, yet there is no great amount of actual enrichment even here, and the pillars, where we should certainly have looked for floriated capitals, are without that most effective of enrichments. Their real merit consists in their perfect proportion, the exquisitely balanced relation between the arch and its pier, and the beautiful form of the former. Now we may at once see that these arches could have stood nowhere but where they do, in a church of large size, but without a clerestory. From a common village church of course their size would exclude them; in most churches with the same height in the wall as Dorchester, we find a clerestory, which would at once cut down the dimensions of the arches. Nor can we conceive arches of exactly this proportion carrying a clerestory in a church of greater height. They would never do, like some other forms, such as the tall Perpendicular pillar with its lower and narrower arch, to carry a *low* clerestory. The span and shape of the arch alone might not be amiss in such grand compositions as the presbyteries of Lincoln and Ely; but in this case the superincumbent mass would require a far more massive pier, and so completely destroy their effect. In fact no other arrangement could have admitted this arcade; no other arcade would have suited so well with the arrangement employed. They are, on the whole, considered simply as arcades, the finest I know, and their beauty is wholly the result of that capital error in the general design, the omission of the clerestory. Arches of not dissimilar proportion are found, from the very same reason, in the choir of Stafford Church, which has the advantage over Dorchester of a much longer vista. Though no more suited to bear a clerestory than these at Dorchester, they had been compelled to groan under one of the poorest character, which our own times have seen happily removed.

EDWARD A. FREEMAN.

(*To be continued.*)

ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF  
DORCHESTER.\*§ 2.—*Architectural History.*

HAVING thus contemplated the effects produced on the several parts of the building by the peculiarities of its general arrangement, we will now proceed to the second part of our subject, the history of the fabric. And I imagine that in so doing we shall easily find the key to those peculiarities. Dorchester, like Llandaff, is an instance of a church growing up from small dimensions to a considerable size, without any thorough reconstruction either of the whole or of any essential portion. And it is to this circumstance that each owes its peculiar character. But, with this striking analogy in their general history, in its minuter circumstances we shall find but little resemblance, except the accidental circumstance that in both the whole extent of the Decorated period was a season of extraordinary activity, while there is very little work of a later date. At Llandaff also the changes which the fabric has undergone are of the most complicated and perplexing character; while the history of Dorchester, since the time when we can first call it complete, is comparatively simple; additions have been numerous, but, for the most part, they are merely additions, with no reconstructions or insertions of any importance. Also at Dorchester there has been comparatively little extension in the way of length, while Llandaff has received the addition of that stately Early English nave, built almost entirely to the west of the original Norman church, on which it grounds its best pretension to an architectural rank equal to its ecclesiastical.

We have then the explanation; no one would sit down and design such a church as either Llandaff or Dorchester is at present. An original architect would probably have preferred to produce something of the comparatively humble scale of Llanbadarn or Leonard Stanley. But in both cases successive benefactors, finding an originally small fabric, and, adding to it each after his own taste, with but little reference to other portions, have gradually produced what we now see;

\* Continued from p. 169.

only at Llandaff the addition of the nave gave an opportunity of constructing one important part of the church on the full cathedral type, which at Dorchester never occurred.

No part of Dorchester church is older than its refoundation as a monastic establishment by Bishop Alexander in 1140. No trace remains of the original cathedral, or of the buildings commenced by Remigius before the removal of the see to Lincoln. Indeed I greatly doubt the existence, in the present church, of any work of so early a date as Alexander himself. The most distinctive features of the earliest work now remaining, Mr. Addington truly says, cannot be earlier than about 1180. Probably till then the Saxon cathedral remained in use as the Abbey Church. This will appear from several considerations. Remigius is said to have begun to build; but whatever he built, which, after all, need not have been a new cathedral, he left unfinished. The old cathedral, or part of it, would doubtless stand till the new one had advanced some way towards perfection. Now, between Remigius and Alexander, we might fancy the Saxon cathedral pulled down, but we can hardly fancy another church built. From Alexander we should naturally have looked for a new church; but he does not appear to have built one; at least the oldest work in the present is forty years after his foundation, and one can hardly imagine a church of his erection being swept away so very soon. Unless then the monks of Dorchester went on for forty years without any church at all, we must suppose that the Saxon cathedral survived the loss of its rank about a hundred years, and was immediately succeeded by a Transitional Norman building not earlier than 1180.

To ascertain the exact nature and extent of this, the first building with which our architectural history is concerned, is the question of most difficulty which we shall meet with in the course of our inquiries; and even here, it is tolerably plain sailing through a good half of its dimensions. The nave was clearly co-extensive with the present one, but the extent of the chancel is less certain.

The portion which fixes the date of the original church is the chancel-arch of Transitional date; its band being continued as a string both to the east and west, shows the whole to be of one piece. The north wall of the nave remains untouched, except by the insertion of windows and a door-

The  
Romanesque  
Church.

way. The two large Decorated windows are quite near the east end, and, while the cloister remained against this side of the nave, must, from their height in the wall, have had very much the appearance of a clerestory. But by far the greater part of the wall is left blank; possibly in the original nave there were no windows at all on the north side.<sup>1</sup> If there were any, they must, from the level of the string, have been placed quite as high in the wall as the present ones, and from the same cause, namely the position of the cloister, just as at Leonard Stanley. On the south side the string is continued a little way, but is cut through by the arches into the subsequent south aisle. The Norman nave then was without aisles, and exactly corresponded with the present one.

Going east of the chancel arch, we find the Norman walls of the nave continued for a little way on each side, and marked by the same string. A rude arch on each side has been cut through the wall, but evidently, as Mr. Addington says, at quite a late period. There was originally a solid wall on each side up to the point where the Decorated arches of the choir now commenced.<sup>2</sup> The south wall was an external one, and the external plinth may still be seen in the south aisle. But to the north there was a building attached which had a west door opening to the cloister, which still remains. At present this is part of the north choir aisle; but we must remember that, when originally built, there was a solid wall between it and the choir, so that, whatever it was, it was not in strictness an aisle. This part of the church has been much tampered with by the insertion of a late and ugly window, and the addition of an awkward buttress (at *c*), apparently when the cloisters were destroyed. Probably some considerable portion of the conventual buildings abutted upon the church at this point.

Thus much is the whole extent of the undoubtedly Transitional work, contemporaneous with the chancel arch. The extent and finish of the choir is not clear from our evidence. Did it actually terminate at this point, possibly with the addition of an apse? or was it continued to a considerable distance eastwards? Mr. Addington has marked out as the eastern boundary of the Norman choir a point (*d*) to which we shall have again to refer; but we shall soon see that if

<sup>1</sup> At Monkton there is only one window in the north side of the nave, in the position occupied at Dorchester by the Decorated

insertions. Did they supplant a similar one?

<sup>2</sup> This wall is expressed in the plan by dotted lines.



it extended thus far, it must have extended very much further. The Norman choir either stopped where the Norman strings terminate at *e* or else reached as far as the present east ends of the choir aisles. The most probable view is that a small choir such as suggested above was originally designed, but that, during the progress of erection, the design was altered, and the choir carried out on a much grander scale, with such little advance of style as the length of time required for carrying out so great a design almost necessarily involved.

I ground this belief on two facts, each of which appear to me to prove one half of it. That such an extended choir was carried out at a period not very distant from that of the erection of the nave is shown by the certain traces of it which still remain. But that such a choir was an after-thought, not a part of the original design, is, perhaps, not absolutely proved, but at least rendered extremely probable, by circumstances tending to show that the point (*e*) where the Norman string terminates, is no arbitrary break, but marks some constructive division of the church.

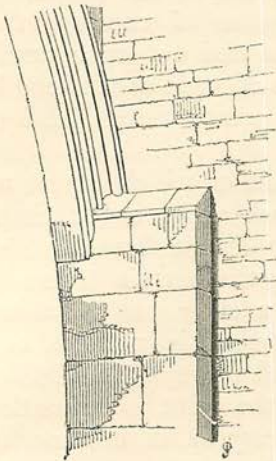
First, it will be observed that at this point an entire change takes place in the external wall on the north side. It is not continued of the same width, but the eastern portion is very much thicker, the excess being external. An arch also, having, as Mr. Addington observes, "much of Early English character," is here thrown across the aisle (at *f*), dividing the original Norman building attached to the choir from the aisle added to the east of it. Again, the course followed by the Decorated architect when the splendid arches of the choir were added, might possibly tend to show that the Norman wall did not continue any further than it does at present. For in that case one does not see why he should not have cut a fourth arch through the part where the round arch has since been cut, rather than leave a blank wall to the great disfigurement of his choir. For though the arch across the north aisle would <sup>3</sup> have prevented a perfectly continuous arcade, yet the difficulty might have been obviated by the employment of a more massive pier

<sup>3</sup> This arch, as we shall presently see, is contemporary with the north arcade, at all events part of the same design, though perhaps actually erected earlier. But if it was thought that the difference in the wall

at this point required to be cloked by an arch, it would, even if absolutely contemporary, have had just the same effect on the design of the arcade as if it had been found previously existing.

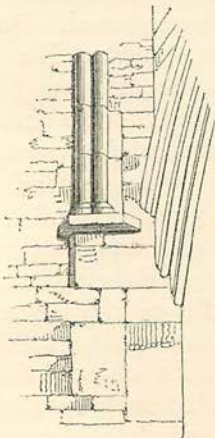
—one for instance formed of two responds—at this particular point, as is often done in similar cases.

It is therefore most probable that the choir was originally designed to terminate—allowing, perhaps, as was before said, for an apse—at this point. But the extent of the actual choir, which, on this ground, I consider to be an afterthought, is quite certain. There can be no doubt, though the fact is one which, as far as I am aware, has hitherto been unnoticed, that the choir was extended as far as the present termination of the choir aisles at some time during the transition from the Norman to the Early English style. It will be remembered that the north choir aisle is transitional from Early English to Decorated, certainly not later than the time of Edward I. Now looking



Norman Pilaster. N.E. Angle of Original Choir.

attentively at the east end of this aisle, we shall find that it is built up against a flat pilaster buttress (*a a*), which has clearly formed part of an east end of the choir. A portion of the pilaster may also be discerned inside, where it has been cut away. In the corresponding position on the south side a similar buttress may be traced, though less distinctly; its set-off may be seen, and also the way in which the masonry of the aisle has been worked into its original quoin. Just above the buttress may be clearly traced part of a clustered angle-shaft and the string below, the projection of the latter making its angular position distinctly visible.<sup>4</sup> Besides this, in taking down the masonry which formerly blocked the circle in the head of the east window, there was found a stone with tooth-moulding on it, which



Remains of Norman Turret. S.E. Angle of Original Choir.

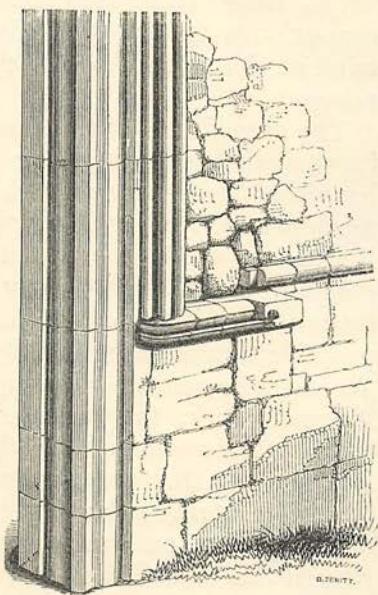
<sup>4</sup> For a more complete explanation of these appearances—I believe the first actual observation of them on both sides I

may fairly claim to myself—I have to thank my friend Mr. Jones.

apparently formed part of a jamb. We may therefore conclude that at one time the choir terminated at this point with an Early English front, flanked by pilasters, that to the south (as being on the show side) carried up into an ornamental turret, and that some of its windows or arcades were enriched with tooth-moulding; and that this front existed before the present north aisle was added.

In the external wall of the north aisle there is also a considerable extent of masonry, which seems to belong to a period intermediate between the original Norman erection and the early Decorated work of the greater portion of that aisle: this includes the western bay of the aisle, reckoning from the transverse arch at *f*. A little westward of its doorway is a most conspicuous break in the wall, with a change of string (at *d*); somewhat clumsily effected, as they are not on the same level. Internally also we can distinctly observe the seam, and trace the original wall in its basement, the thickness having been, as Mr. Addington remarks, diminished during the Decorated reconstruction. That is, this part of the wall was rebuilt from the string, while to the east of this point it is an original Decorated erection.

From this we may infer that the choir, whose east end we have just discovered, had, or was designed to have, a north aisle; but as it is clear from the remains of the east end that it could not have extended so far eastward as the ends of the present aisles, we may most probably conclude that it reached as far as the point where the masonry breaks in the north wall, and no further. If we suppose an arch, or two small arches, dividing the choir and its north aisle, where the westernmost of the three Decorated arches now stands, while the



Junction of Norman and Decorated Work.  
North Aisle of Choir.

eastern part of the choir had merely an external wall, one can understand better why the Decorated architect should bring this whole space within the scope of his new arrangement, and leave the Norman wall to the west untouched, than why he should cut through the Norman wall up to a certain point and there leave off. The irregularity of the arches would be a greater eyesore than the mere blank wall beyond the whole range. Again, as he reconstructed the whole north aisle from the Early English transverse arch at *f*, this involved a change in the choir from that point eastward; while to make any alterations to the west of it might have been very desirable in itself, but had no connexion with the particular design which occupied the mind of the brotherhood or their architect at that particular moment.

The second idea of the church then included a choir with its new portion commencing from what we may imagine to have been designed as the chord of the original apse, with a north aisle extending along about half its length. Whether it had any south aisle or not we have no certain means of judging. But though we may fairly consider this as, in idea at least, a second form of the church, it seems on the whole most probable that it never actually existed distinct from the first. We must remember how very late is the character of the Norman work, fast verging upon Early English; while the scanty remains of the choir, in their pilaster buttresses and angle-shafts, are hardly more advanced in character. No great extent of time could have elapsed between the two. We may then on the whole most probably conclude that though this extended choir was the second in idea, it was the first in existence after the days of Alexander; most likely, as was above suggested, the short Norman choir was never finished, but the design was changed in its progress, and continued on a more extended form, in a slightly advanced style.

The third period embraces the Decorated changes, which have had so permanent an effect upon the appearance of the building, introducing all its most rare and beautiful features, and bringing it in its most essential portions to its condition immediately to those days of destruction whose works we are now endeavouring to undo. In this, as I have before remarked, it

Decorated  
Additions.

resembles Llandaff, as also in the circumstance that the Decorated alterations were not effected all at once; in each three distinct stages may be traced: but there is this important difference, that at Llandaff all the work of this age was executed from one general design, with merely the changes of detail consequent upon the gradual manner in which it was carried out, whereas at Dorchester there is no such general design; there is certainly a clear attempt to bring each of the two later portions into harmony with that which immediately preceded it; but the differences between them are not merely in detail; each retains a remarkable independence, and, as it were, isolation from the rest.

The first portion of the Decorated work includes the greater part of the north aisle (all, in fact, except North Choir Aisle. the portion of earlier masonry in its western bay), together with the three grand arches on the north side of the choir. The style here is rather to be considered as Transitional, than as fully developed Decorated; the windows indeed contain complete Geometrical tracery, and, except in the eastern one, not of the very earliest kind; but much of the detail is hardly removed from Early English; the shafts against the wall have square plinths; the tooth-moulding occurs in their capitals and in those of some of the jamb-shafts of the windows; the east window, the diagonal buttress at the north-east angle, and the transverse arch already mentioned, might all, taken by themselves, pass for Early English. Yet there is no occasion to suppose them to be parts of any other design; they were probably merely the first instalments of a design which took a considerable time to accomplish, and of which the great arcade and the tracery of the windows are the latest. In other respects too, the details of this whole aisle are well worthy of attention, both from their singularity and beauty. For instance, there is an early instance of a doorway with a square-headed label;<sup>5</sup> the same also presenting a singular and extremely unpleasant example of the discontinuous impost. This is the strongest case of a tendency towards that disagreeable form which is continually recurring throughout the church at most of the

<sup>5</sup> One still earlier, and with a still more complete anticipation of Perpendicular, is found among the conventual buildings of Gloucester Cathedral.

periods of its architecture.<sup>6</sup> The tracery of the windows on the north side is also a valuable study, two of them presenting singularities in the way of filling up the circle in the head. The aisle seems never to have been designed for vaulting; its steep lean-to roof has been already commented on. There are shafts, already mentioned, against the north wall, but far too low to be connected with any vault or other roof; they were doubtless designed for pillar brackets.

Besides this north aisle of the choir, there is reason to believe that a south aisle to the nave was commenced at this time, though only commenced. The present south aisle is indeed, in its most important features, both within and without, of a later date, and we shall presently have to consider it at length. But it contains one very important portion which can hardly fail to belong to this first stage of the Decorated enlargement. Its west end, though now wretchedly defaced and mutilated, must have originally been not the least attractive portion of the church, and, from its peculiar arrangements, it derived unusual importance. It was in fact the west front of the church, as some of the con-

<sup>6</sup> It will be remembered that this doorway is placed immediately east of the seam in the wall and change of string at *d*. The Decorated string here has a curious appearance at the point where it terminates, or rather commences, as if it had been intended to continue it along some building at right angles to the wall of the church. There is, however, this difficulty, that no important part of the conventual buildings could possibly have joined the church at this point, as they would have interfered with the window to the west, and would also most probably have left some trace of their presence. On the other hand, one cannot imagine why a mere breast-wall, which is all that seems capable of having existed, or being designed here, should have been so elaborately treated, or so studiously identified with the church, as by this continuation of the string.

It has indeed been suggested to me, and that on the very highest authority, that there was, or was to be, a porch over this doorway, and I therefore infer, that this string would have been continued along the inner face of the western wall. From this opinion I must beg leave to dissent. A porch in such a position, though, I believe, not unique—I do not distinctly remember whether that at Wimborne Minster is original or otherwise—is certainly extremely unusual; and this

particular doorway, from its whole character, and its intimate connexion with the strings, windows, &c., seems peculiarly ill-suited to such a finish. A porch of any sort could hardly fail to have cut through the window above, whose cill comes down immediately upon the head of the doorway. Again, if the string were turned to be carried along its western wall, a similar treatment would doubtless have been applied to its eastern also; and there is no break or other noticeable appearance in the string to the east of the doorway. It seems to me perfectly clear that no porch was ever actually erected, and I cannot bring myself to believe that any was ever contemplated; at all events, not when the aisle was built, an opinion which would seem involved in any argument built upon the appearance of the string.

It is to be noticed that on either side of the window over this doorway is a vertical string, projecting from the wall like a label, running up a considerable portion of the height of the jamb. It is not quite clear whether they were continued to join the label of the window: if so, the effect must have been very bad. These strings, which are not easily understood on any view, but which form an additional argument against the porch theory, are not correctly given—a rare instance of inaccuracy—in Mr. Addington's engraving.

ventual buildings must have come close up against the tower. It has a west door, and over that a large window which is now completely built up, so that it can only be seen from within. At the angle is a very fine buttress, almost amounting to a turret, with niches, high pediments, pinnacles, etc. Now, it so happens, as Mr. Addington has observed, that the details both of this buttress and of the west window are altogether dissimilar to anything in the rest of the aisle, and appear at least as early as the south choir aisle, to which they present a much greater resemblance. Indeed he might have safely gone still further, and pronounced them to be contemporary with the *north* choir aisle.<sup>7</sup> The whole detail of the buttress and window, especially the square plinths to its internal jamb-shafts, might be safely called Early English. Probably a south aisle was commenced, but was carried no further than the west wall ; this part remaining unfinished, while the greater works were being effected in the choir. We shall only observe in this place that this front received some alterations, to be hereafter described, during the later Decorated changes.

The second portion of Decorated work includes the great south choir aisle, with the southern arcade. This South Choir Aisle. must have followed upon the completion of the other with very little intermission. The style is somewhat more advanced, and is now confirmed Decorated, but it still retains quite the character of Early Gothic, in its marked distinctness of parts, the bold shafts, deep mouldings, bands, &c. The arcades on each side the choir are identical in general effect, the architect of the south aisle having evidently intended to bring his work, in this respect, into the most perfect harmony with that of his predecessor ; but on a more minute examination, differences of detail may be discovered, some of which have been pointed out by Mr. Addington. The section of the piers is not identical, and the bases are very different ; the later ones having more numerous mouldings, as well as much bolder and more projecting plinths, all of which also are octagonal, while on the north side that of every alternate member is round. Those on the north side, however, are not identical among themselves.

The two eastern windows of this aisle belong to the same

<sup>7</sup> They resemble it more nearly in general character ; yet the string on the buttress is one used in the south choir aisle, but not occurring in the north.

general type as those on the north side, but they have peculiarities of their own rendering them well worthy of examination. The occurrence of a spherical triangle as the centre-piece of a subarcuated window is by no means usual, and it is accompanied by that strange, though much less uncommon, form which I have elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> for want of a better name, denominated spiked foliation. Those on the south side have Intersecting tracery, to which the round foils of the piercings in the head give somewhat of the character of Arch and Foil.<sup>9</sup>

I have already commented on the most remarkable features of this aisle, considered as a part of the general composition and arrangement of the church. Its extent westward is clearly marked, as its west wall still remains perfect; for when the south aisle of the nave, in its present form, was added to the west of it, the two were not, as usual, connected by an arch, but they were separated by a blank wall, the only approach from one to another being by a small doorway. This strange proceeding was probably occasioned by a ritual consideration; the very elevated altar-platform just west of this wall might not have been so well introduced, had the two aisles been architecturally continuous; but a greater æsthetical blunder can hardly be conceived, than this complete blocking off of one portion of the building from another.

The church then, as standing for a while complete at this point, consisted of a nave without aisles, a choir with an aisle on each side, that to the south of almost unparalleled dimensions. We must remember that the choir at this time did not project eastward beyond the aisles, so that the termination of the choir and the two aisles were embraced in one continuous eastern front. In this extensive range were comprised three somewhat heterogeneous elements; the two large gabled extremities of the choir and its south aisle, of much the same height and breadth—though with the advantage in the latter respect somewhat on the side of the aisle—the one with its Decorated windows, the other, we may conceive, with a composition of lancets; and finally the small lean-to of the north aisle. Now this last must have looked like a mere insignificant excrescence, and must have given the whole an unpleasing effect of irregularity. And indeed

<sup>8</sup> Essay on Tracery, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 55; 46, note o.



the other two grand compositions must have lost much from their position ; they were both intended to stand out independently as the terminations of distinct buildings, not to form mere component parts of a single extended front.

Again, the great size and grandeur now assumed by the choir and its accessories must have tended to throw the nave into complete insignificance. We may also doubt whether the south choir aisle, standing distinct with a soaring high roof, could have been at all a satisfactory object. A similar arrangement on quite a small scale is pleasing and effective, as improving the picturesque outline ; but on the vast scale on which it was here presented, it could only have caused the exaggeration of a smaller type to have been even more strongly felt than at present.

These two deficiencies then probably caused the additions which constitute the third period of Decorated work ; having suggested the prolongation of the choir to its present extent, and rendered still more imperative the addition commenced some time before of an aisle to the south of the nave. I place these together, as they cannot be very far removed from each other in point of date, and are so manifestly remedies for the faults of the structure as completed by the preceding additions. But there is no particular resemblance in the work of the two, or any reason to believe that they formed in any sense parts of the same design. Most probably one was the work of the convent, the other of the parish ; and in this we may perhaps find a key to the strange obstruction between the nave aisle and choir aisle. Forming, as they apparently did, altogether distinct chapels, one belonging to the conventual, the other to the parochial establishment, their independence and isolation may be a little better understood.

A south aisle then was now added to the nave. The contrast between its internal and external arrangements is very striking. I have just remarked its extreme isolation within from the choir aisle to the east of it. Outside, on the other hand, the two form one continuous range. The seam, indeed, where the masonry of the two dates is united, is perceptible enough, and a more minute examination will show that the details of the two portions are by no means identical. They are, however, so well harmonised together, that the first impression of every visitor would be that they

South Aisle  
of Nave.

formed parts of one uniform design. In comparing, however, a bay of the choir aisle and one of the nave aisle, we shall find that though the proportion and general effect is unaltered, a considerable change of style had taken place in the interval between their erection. The sharp pedimental head of the buttress has been exchanged for a very long set-off, and indeed the whole air of the buttresses, when minutely examined, is very different. The size of the windows and the lines of their tracery remain as nearly the same as possible, but in the foliations we may remark the minute, yet not unimportant difference already alluded to. The mouldings too, are totally different; the deeply moulded architrave rising with a discontinuous impost from the chamfered jamb is exchanged for a form of later and more meagre character, that variety of the ogee which Mr. Paley calls the wave-moulding; one, I may remark, almost monotonously prevalent in the Decorated work in St. David's Cathedral. Similarly, within, the bold distinct jamb-shaft of the choir aisle has given way to a mere slender bowtell with a capital. In like manner the three arches which divide this aisle from the nave, though evidently adaptations to those in the choir, are of a later and inferior character. They would by themselves be called extremely fine arches, but compared with the others, they are far less pleasing both in proportion and detail. The pier is too slender, of quite another section, and with a rather awkward base; the arch mouldings, too, are not nearly so rich, and exhibit an approach to the Perpendicular cavetto. Other differences will be found externally in the section of the strings, in the labels of the windows being terminated with heads, while in the choir aisle they are continued as a string, and in the presence of a distinct basement-moulding.

The south wall of this aisle, and the arcade within, present no difficulty, and require little comment. The latter was cut through the Norman wall, which remains to the east and west of it. But the junction of the work of this period with the earlier portions to the east and west presents some remarkable features. At the east end we have the blank wall already spoken of, which is clearly part of the work of the choir aisle, as is proved by the string of the latter being continued along its eastern wall. In this wall we have a window and a doorway, usually considered to have been the

original west window and doorway of the choir aisle before the addition of that to the nave. The window is, on any showing, a difficulty. It is now, as will be remembered, blocked; on the eastern side it leaves no trace, but it has a western face of the most remarkable meagreness, quite unlike anything else in the church, and such as one can hardly conceive to have been the original condition of the principal window of a building so highly finished as is this aisle. Moreover, this rude opening, ill proportioned, without moulding, without splay, looks at least as much like an internal as an external face. Yet, as the wall belongs to the eastern and not to the western chapel, the internal face of a strictly external window it can never have been. It might possibly have been designed as a window between the two chapels, left incomplete, or subsequently blocked. Fenestriform perforations of solid walls between the different parts of a church, though rare, are not unknown. A very graceful example occurs in the chancel of Rushden church, Northamptonshire.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the doorway, I for a long time supposed, in common with Mr. Addington, and, I believe, with the generally received opinion on the subject, that it was an original external doorway to the eastern chapel, previous to the addition of the western. But repeated examinations have convinced me that it was cut through the wall after the addition of the latter. In character it agrees much more closely with the later work to the west than with the earlier work to the east. Its label is of a late section, which does not occur in the eastern chapel, but forms the external string of the western. In its jambs too we find the same wave-moulding, employed in the windows of the latter, but unknown in the older work. Again its position, thrust into a corner, is not what we would expect for an external doorway, which would, moreover, have been for some while a principal entrance into the church, and, as far as effect is concerned, the substitute for a western portal. How different its treatment would have been in such a case, we may judge from the prominent position and ornamental character of that in the existing west front of the aisle. It is clearly thrust into its place to make room for the great altar platform (at *q*), and is a mere passage from one chapel into the other.

<sup>1</sup> Engraved in the Northamptonshire Churches.

In like manner, in St. David's Cathedral, the approach from the nave aisles into the transepts is not, as usual, by open arches, but by doorways exactly analogous to this, and similarly having their external face to the west, as indeed is but natural.

The external juncture of the two chapels also presents some apparent difficulties. I have already alluded to the perceptible break in the masonry between them (at *h*). The appearance presented at first sight is that of an eastern buttress to the western chapel with the wall of the eastern chapel built up against it. But besides that this is rendered impossible by the relative dates of the two chapels, otherwise distinctly proved, the piecing in the upper part of the wall is such as to show that it can hardly be a real buttress so treated. In part of the seam, however, we may most certainly discern a quoin to the west with rubble built up against it to the east. This would, at first sight, seem to show that this wall is older than the south aisle of the choir. Yet in another part of the same seam the respective positions of the rubble and ashlar are reversed; which brings the evidence back to where it before stood. The key to these perplexing appearances has been supplied by Professor Willis. The traces are traces of a buttress, not however of an eastern buttress of the western chapel, but of another of the pedimented buttresses of the eastern one, destroyed at the time of the western addition. A little consideration will readily show that its removal, and the consequent patching, might easily account for all the appearances already recounted.

At the west end also, some alterations were made in the front previously erected. I am indebted to the same high authority quoted in the last paragraph for the fact that the small buttresses were now added to the turret in a different stone. Perhaps also the small pinnacles were added or tampered with. A western doorway was inserted, exactly similar to that in the south wall. The external string over this is of the later form, the same as that employed on the south wall, while the original one, similar to that of the south choir aisle, is preserved on the turret.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The juncture of these strings is effected far more artificially than the similar change in the north choir aisle; at both points of contact they are worked in the

same stone. It has been ingeniously remarked by Mr. Jones, that the later string, which contains a cavetto, might have been hollowed out of the elder one.

The last instalment of the Decorated enlargement consisted of that eastern addition to the choir, which constitutes the Presbytery of the church, and forms one of its most magnificent portions. I have already commented on the æsthetical grounds, both of internal and external effect, to which this great change was probably due. No such extension of the church in this direction could have been contemplated during the earlier Decorated changes, as a piscina of that date (*i*) marks the original site of the high altar just against the old east wall. A presbytery perhaps existed screened off within the choir, as appears from marks against the base of the first pillar. A screen in a similar position still remains in St. David's Cathedral.

There is probably no existing building which shows a greater number of singularities crowded together in a small compass than this eastern bay. The large windows by which it is lighted are all of a very singular character; each has its own peculiarities, but two remarkable characteristics extend through all three: one is a tendency to carry the tracery through the whole window, instead of confining it as usual to the head; the other to mix up with the actual tracery sculptured figures and other details which cannot be considered as forming any real part of its design. Neither of these tendencies is unparalleled elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> but I am not aware of any other development of them nearly so extensive.

With regard to the tendency to extend the tracery lower in the window than usual, I need only remind you that, whenever the window-arch is of the simple-pointed form, the tracery should spring from a point level with the impost of the arch. Windows with square and other flat heads form a legitimate class of exceptions, but with the usual form any difference sufficient to catch the eye always produces awkwardness. As an instance, I may refer to the elaborate window in the small chapel attached to the south transept of Oxford Cathedral. This is a sort of half-measure, and is consequently unsuccessful; at Dorchester the same notion is more fully carried out with much better effect. For here each side of the east window is one expanse of tracery; the design for the head indeed commences at the usual point, but below that the mullions are crossed by two ranges of

<sup>3</sup> For examples of the latter, I may mention the east windows of Barnack Church

and Merton Chapel.—*Essay on Tracery*, pp. 46, 47.

Reticulated figures, forming a magnificent species of transom. Within there is much rich sculpture, pinnacles, &c., not forming part of the design of the tracery.

In the Jesse window on the north side, the two tendencies run so much into one another that it is hard to distinguish them. The actual tracery is of a form common enough, an intersection incomplete at the top; but besides the images with which the mullions and jambs are loaded, the branches thrown off between the mullions must be considered as something intermediate between real tracery and mere extraneous sculpture. The window is rich, and, from its unique character, extremely valuable; still there is something of a confusion of ideas about it, which prevents its being altogether pleasing. Seen from without, it is still less so; here the display of sculpture being not seen, the branches assume the character of mere tracery-bars, and, as such, are very unsatisfactory.

The south window is remarkable as being an early instance of Perpendicular tracery, for such, though there is no reason to consider it as of later date than the rest, it decidedly is in its main lines. The fondness for sculptured ornament comes out here nearly as conspicuously as in the other two, and the other tendency alluded to is at work also, though less busily. The tracery is of the Alternate kind, the basement-lights being of equal width with those beneath them. It may be considered to spring from the transom, as the mullions of the range above it are not a continuation of those below, but spring from the apices of the lights below, just like the basement lights. Consequently, while the lower part has four lights of the ordinary arrangements, the upper has three whole lights and half a light, so to speak, on each side.

The late form of the tracery in this window is an exception to the general character of this portion of the church. In its other details it more frequently reproduces forms earlier than from its date we should have expected. Thus the east window has distinct and banded jamb-shafts, very different from the mere bowtells in the south aisle of the nave, and its tracery, as well as that of the north window, is as much Geometrical as Flowing. Externally, too, in one of the buttresses we have that most singular phenomenon, a niche of the fourteenth century adorned with the chevron of the

twelfth. There can be no doubt whatever as to this being a mere individual freak ; but it shows the independent and eclectic animus of the architect.<sup>4</sup>

Another singularity is to be found in the four little windows at the back of the superb sedilia and piscina. These form externally a sort of rough arcade ; within, their form is a Flowing modification of the spherical triangle. It is well worthy of notice that the glass which they now contain—old glass of the twelfth century—has only been in them about twenty years, though it is so well adapted to its position that Mr. Addington seems to have supposed the peculiar form of the openings to have been specially accommodated to its reception.

It is to be noticed that these sedilia, though part of the same work as the rest of the presbytery, must have been an afterthought, inserted after the window was finished,<sup>5</sup> as they cut through the string beneath it. Also this string is prolonged quite to the east end, so that the jamb-shafts of the east window can never have been added.<sup>6</sup> The capitals and bands stand ready for them ; probably distinct Purbeck shafts—a late instance again—were contemplated, but never added.

I have now gone through the history of the whole building, except the timber porch on the south side, and the western tower. The former, as a mere Porch. Perpendicular addition, the only one in the church, sufficiently tells its own story : so that I need only call attention to it as a good specimen of its own date and material ; and remark that, as in several other instances, as the school-house at Higham Ferrers, its original low roof has been raised in plaster.

The tower appears to be chiefly a reconstruction of the seventeenth century, but portions both of Norman Tower. and Decorated work seem to have been preserved or

<sup>4</sup> Professor Willis thinks that this is a case of old materials being worked up again. Still, as they are worked up in a position, and probably for a use, quite different from their original one, such a freak of preservation has no essential difference from a freak of imitation.

<sup>5</sup> I have to thank Mr. Jewitt for a suggestion, that they may have been removed from some other position. It is not, however, easy to see what, in this case, could

have been their original position. I might mention that the sedilia now occupying an anomalous position in the north aisle of Dursley Church, Gloucestershire, have also apparently been moved.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Willis doubts this, remarking a break in the string a little to the east, and considering that the eastern stone has been thrust out of its proper place.

*The only old portion of the glass in the circles. This window ornament as here painted in various colors.*

worked up again. There is some extent of the former at the S. E. angle, against which the west front of the aisle is built up. The round-headed windows may possibly be the original ones built up again, but they cannot be in their original position, as the break in the masonry is visible enough. The octagonal turrets of alternate flint and stone-work are, if I mistake not, a localism, not indeed of the country about Oxford, but of a district more to the south; at least they occur again at Reading and Wallingford. Their effect would be good, except that they stop in a most awkward manner just below the battlement. The belfry windows are hideous, and the tower, on a near inspection, is altogether poor and clumsy; yet it is not without effect in a distant view; its low and massive proportions are by no means out of character with the general appearance of the church, and I am sure it would be very ill exchanged for a loftier and more elaborate specimen. It has always struck me as having somehow or other a very monastic air; from many points of view any one would suppose it to be central.

*(To be continued.)*



ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF  
DORCHESTER.\*§ 3.—*Decay and Restoration of the Church.*

I WILL conclude my subject by a brief account of the disfigurements which the church has undergone in later times, and of the efforts recently made to restore it to its original beauty.

The church of Dorchester, as I before stated, was all along parochial as well as monastic, the nave belonging to the parish, the choir and its appurtenances to the abbey. This was also the case at Tewkesbury ; in both cases doubtless the parochial portion alone would have been left standing, just as was the case some years later with the collegiate church at Fotheringhay, had not private munificence rescued the conventual portion from destruction. The choir, &c., of Dorchester Church was purchased for 140*l.*, by Richard Beauforest, of Dorchester, Gentleman, (a relation most probably of Abbot Richard Beauforest, who put stalls in the choir, where his brass remains,) and by him bequeathed to the parish by his will, dated 1554, with the curious proviso "that the said parishioners shall not alter or alienate the said church, implements, or any part or parcel thereof without the consent of my heirs and executors." I must leave to lawyers to decide the possibility of a future alienation of the choir of Dorchester Abbey ; as to the prohibition of any alteration, I am afraid I shall soon have to show you that here at least the wills of founders have not been too superstitiously observed.

The condition of Dorchester Church is, even now, very deplorable, and it was still more so when the attention of the Oxford Architectural Society was first directed to it in 1844. It had shared the fate of almost every parochialised abbey church ; its size at once exceeding the means of a poor agricultural parish to maintain, and being also much larger than was actually necessary for church accommodation,

\* Continued from p. 280.

the result has been twofold. The whole building fell into a general state of decay, and the necessity, real or supposed, of blocking off only a part of so extensive a building for purposes of divine service, has led to those strange internal divisions and partitions, which at a first visit altogether baffle the inquirer in his endeavours to make out the original arrangements, singular enough, as we have seen, in themselves.

The part of the church now in use consists of the choir and aisles, and a small part of the nave, completely blocked off to the west and south from the remainder. And within the choir itself, its two eastern bays are again screened off to form a secondary chancel. The effect of these cross-purposes, till one gets thoroughly familiar with the building, is extremely puzzling.

But besides all this, some extreme cases of barbarism had taken place at Dorchester. These chiefly concerned the roofs. In the south aisle of the nave a most unaccountable freak had been practised; the single high-pitched roof had been in 1633 exchanged for one with a double ridge, which, while singularly ugly, is, I should imagine, weaker than the usual form; it could not have been any saving in actual quantity of materials, though it may possibly have allowed the old ones to be more extensively employed in the reconstruction. This seems also to have been the cause of the blocking of the west window. The original gable, which must have existed between the nave and choir aisles, was also lowered, as may be clearly seen inside. Then, throughout the choir and its south aisle, and through nearly the whole extent of the nave, the roofs had been completely lowered, leaving only a small piece at the west end of the nave, which still remains, and has a very odd effect. The two eastern gables had been destroyed with the roofs; this, in the south aisle, had involved the destruction of nearly everything above the contemplated vaulting; while in the choir the loss was still more serious, the upper part of the great east window being completely destroyed. These were the chief portions which called for repair, besides numerous smaller mutilations in every part of the building.

In the autumn of 1844 an estimate was first made of the cost of the several portions requiring restoration, and in the spring of 1845 the energies of the Society began to be practically directed to its accomplishment. Some delays

were met with on account of the extraordinary circumstances of the parish. The church was formerly a peculiar and impropriation in private hands, but the tithes had been sold and dispersed among a great number of individuals, so that there was no one responsible Lay Rector, and in any case, considering the curious tenure by which the choir is held, it might be very doubtful on whom the repairs would legally fall. Besides this, the parish was then a sort of ecclesiastical oasis, it had no Ordinary whatever; since the sale of the property the impropriation had been divided, but the jurisdiction had completely vanished; no Official of the Peculiar had been appointed for years, so that it was very doubtful whether there were any legal churchwardens. In these circumstances, it was by no means clear to whom to apply for the necessary permission to commence the work. However, the Perpetual Curate and the acting Churchwardens entered zealously into the scheme; and the gentleman who was supposed, if any one, to be chargeable to the repairs of the chancel, gave every facility in his power, which, in one not a member of the Church of England, deserves to be recorded to his great honour. Consequently no practical difficulty was found. A subscription was accordingly opened, collections were made in the parish of an amount most creditable to one so poor, and immediately after the long vacation, the most necessary portion of the work, the repair of the sedilia and piscina and south window of the presbytery, was commenced. These were completed in March, 1846. The principle pursued throughout has been strictly conservative, a diligent repair of what remained, and careful adaptation of what was necessarily new. In this first portion of the restoration, the only absolutely new work required were four finials and four small statues, to have entirely omitted which would have left the sedilia very imperfect.

This much being effected, the efforts of the Society were directed to the restoration of the remainder of the presbytery. This, as involving a new roof, and the completion of the mutilated east window, was a very serious undertaking. Little doubt could be entertained but that the design for the east window originally made, and of which an engraving is given in Mr. Addington's work, contained a centre-piece far too elaborate for the remarkably bold work of the tracery below. A question had also been raised by a writer in the

Ecclesiologist, whether the centre-piece had ever been filled with tracery at all. The Society then called in Mr. Harrison as architect, who, when in Oxford, had been one of its most active members; he at once discovered fragments showing that the circle had contained tracery, and indeed enough to ascertain its general character, and some even of its actual lines. But a fresh difficulty was presented by the extreme liberality of Mr. Harrison, who, while willing to give the work all the benefit of his skill, positively refused to act in any but a gratuitous capacity. As the Society could not possibly accept of his services on those terms, this most important portion of the restoration was finally placed in the hands of Mr. Butterfield. The design which was the result of his investigations, was not quite identical with Mr. Harrison's, though both preserved the same appropriate character of great width and boldness in the piercings. In one respect Mr. Butterfield's completion of the window appears to me open to very great doubt and criticism; he has made the circle not complete, but flowing into the lines of the arch. I do not remember that the remaining fragments gave any grounds for supposing that so unusual and displeasing an arrangement, one in this window peculiarly inappropriate, formed part of the original design. I strongly opposed this freak—for it is nothing more—at the time; but I believe I may truly say that it is the only part of our restoration liable to any serious objection.

While these negotiations were pending, the restoration of a smaller portion was actually effected. This was the Jesse window, which was a mere case of repair, involving no original work. Indeed two places where the design was irrecoverably lost, and no more could be done than guess at the subjects, have been left in their mutilated state. These appear to have represented the Blessed Virgin and the Crucifixion; but as there was some difficulty in obtaining an appropriate design, they have, I believe, without any formal intention, been left in their former state to this day. Perhaps it may be thought that, as their destruction was clearly the result of a formal purpose, and not of mere decay or negligence, it forms a portion of the history of the fabric, and, as such, ought not to be repaired.

The east window was commenced about May 1846, the stone and timber work was completed by June, 1847, and

the glazing of the window, and the necessary fittings of the presbytery were accomplished during the course of the same year. The work of restoration, like the original work of erection, has been very slowly carried on, chiefly owing to the very small amount of funds at our disposal; for as subscriptions continued to drop in, though slowly, it was thought better, on many grounds, to keep something going on, than to stop and recommence. But I am sorry to say that for more than two years<sup>1</sup> nothing has been done at all; the small amount raised has been quite exhausted by the restoration of the sedilia and windows, and the erection of the portion of roof rendered necessary by the opening the head of the east window. About twenty feet of the eastern part has been raised to its original pitch, and this, on account of the great size of the timbers required, has been the most costly portion of the undertaking. Yet the roof is a very simple one, a mere pointed cradle-roof, and, from want of funds, we were most reluctantly compelled to have it plastered between the rafters, and to employ slates—Stonesfield slates however—instead of lead as the external covering. This roof, however, plain as it is, is one capable of admitting any amount of future enrichment in the way of panelling.

I shall not be surprised if I am asked why, while we were able to accomplish only such a small part of the necessary repairs of the building, a large sum was spent on the luxury of modern stained glass for the head of the east window. I believe I may safely say that no part of the general restoration fund would ever have been devoted to such an *ὑστερον πρότερον* kind of proceeding. The little we had at our disposal was all expended on substantial restoration. But as this glass was an individual gift, we could not too narrowly investigate whether the discretion of the donors had been equal to their liberality.

Five years ago I certainly expected more to have been done for Dorchester church than has been done up to this time. The exertions made on the spot are beyond all praise; but the interest taken in the subject by the University and county at large has been far less than might have been reasonably looked for, when we consider the architectural splendour of the building, its historical associations, its

<sup>1</sup> From June, 1850.

peculiarly unfortunate and helpless state at the present day. Yet we have done something; it is not a small matter to have restored that wonderful and unique east window to its original proportions, a change the extent of which can only be appreciated by those who have seen it in its former state of mutilation. And I think we may fairly say that what we have done we have done well; the execution everywhere reflects the greatest credit on the several contractors, and shows that in mere workmanship at least we are in nowise behind our ancestors. Still it would have been more gratifying could I have concluded the architectural history of Dorchester otherwise than by stating that the work of repair has as yet been extended hardly more than twenty feet from the east wall, and that the north aisle of the choir still remains in a state which I believe is positively dangerous.

EDWARD A. FREEMAN.

INTERIOR DIMENSIONS.

	ft.	in.	ft.	in.
Length of Choir and Presbytery . . . . .	.	.	100	0
Breadth . . . . .	23	5		
Length of Nave . . . . .	.	.	87	3
<i>North Aisle of Choir.</i>				
Length . . . . .	83	4		
Width at East end . . . . .	12	1		
Width at West end . . . . .	10	5		
<i>South Aisle of Choir.</i>				
Length . . . . .	82	0		
Width at East end . . . . .	27	8		
Width at West end . . . . .	25	5		
<i>South Aisle of Nave.</i>				
Length . . . . .	81	2		
Width . . . . .	24	10		
Tower (square inside) . . . . .			21	10
Total Length . . . . .			209	1

P.S. I have great pleasure in adding to my account of Dorchester the following letter from Mr. Jewitt. The theory it contains had not occurred or been mentioned to me when I last visited Dorchester; but, speaking from memory, I should say that, while Mr. Jewitt's view of the use of the eastern portion of the aisle and of the chamber which must have existed over it, is extremely probable, I do not think it proves that this chapel ever existed in a complete state before the aisle was added. The east end is certainly of earlier character than the rest, but this is just the same phenomenon which we have seen in the north aisle, and does not seem to me to prove more than that it was actually

built first, not that it formed part of quite another design. Such an addition to the choir as Mr. Jewitt imagines, would surely be very anomalous.

“HEADINGTON, OXFORD,

March 31, 1852.

“DEAR SIR,

“My idea of the south aisle of Dorchester Church is, that the eastern portion, as far as where the vaulting shafts extend internally, is of an earlier date than the rest of the choir aisle, and of the same date as the south-west angle of the nave aisle, both being but little later than the north aisle. I write only from memory, but will, as briefly as possible, give you my reasons for thinking so.

“The windows at the east end of this aisle have Geometrical tracery (though of rather later character than that of the north aisle windows), while those on the south side have Intersecting tracery. The angle stair-turret with its internal doorway, and the piscina, are of the same date, as are also the vaulting shafts, and the wall as far as the first buttress shown on the plan. This will be further proved by observing the different thickness of the wall in this part, and that this difference is exactly co-extensive with the remains of groining in the interior. There is likewise on this part a buttress which, though it ranges in its upper part exactly with the rest, does not, like the rest, reach the ground, and consequently does not appear in the plan.

“All these reasons induce me to think that this portion of the present aisle was either built, or *intended* to be built, as a chapel; that it had its east end terminating in a gable, as the two square-headed windows above the others clearly point out; that the chapel itself was groined; and that the staircase led to an upper room which was appropriated to the officiating priest, and which the two square windows above-mentioned were intended to light. This was a not unusual arrangement, and the situation of the doorway between the altar and the piscina, seems to favour the idea of this being the use of the room.

“I imagine that this design was afterwards abandoned or altered, and the chapel thrown into part of a new aisle, and in order to give a uniformity to it, the turret buttresses were copied, and one of the new windows (which have Intersecting tracery) inserted in the chapel, where probably a Geometrical window had formerly existed.

“The beautiful buttress at the S. W. angle of the nave aisle, seems to have been begun at the same time as the chapel, though the nave aisle was not built until after the choir aisle was completed.

“I have written the above hasty remarks at your request, but merely intend them as suggestions for your consideration.

“I remain, Sir, yours sincerely,

“O. JEWITT.”

“E. A. FREEMAN, Esq.”