

## NOTES ON SOME EXAMPLES OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN CORNWALL.

OF the Mediaeval Architecture of Cornwall, comparatively little is known beyond the very cursory remarks met with in the County histories. This may possibly be attributed to two causes : the absence of facilities of communication, and the almost exclusive interest that its numerous cromlechs, inscribed stones, and other primeval remains, have hitherto commanded. All writers, who have alluded to the subject, agree in informing us that "the Churches of Cornwall are mostly of the late or perpendicular order of Architecture." I was therefore agreeably surprised when, in passing through the county, I observed so many evidences of the incorrectness of this statement, some of the churches presenting specimens of design worthy of the highest and most successful times of English art.

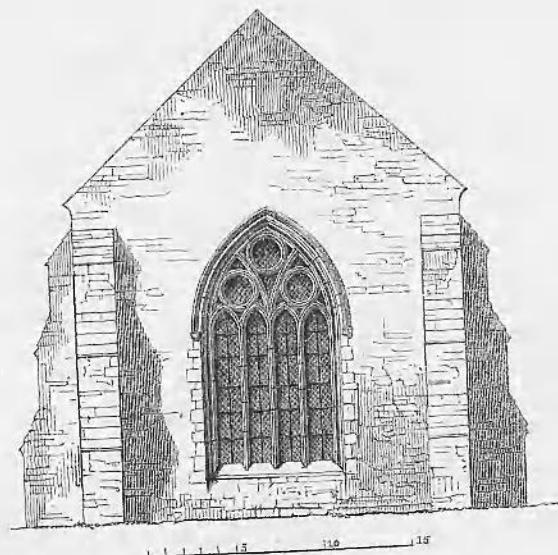
Remnants of the Norman period are rarely to be met with in this county, except in detached and small portions, such as doorways, string courses, corbels, and the like. The Church of St. Germans is, however, an exception worthy of note, presenting a nave and north aisle of purely Norman character. They are separated by six arches supported on massive cylindrical pillars, with the cushion-shaped capital in a variety of forms, the abaci are square, and the arches are recessed with plain soffits. The north wall has been so modernised by the insertion of heterogeneous sashes that its ancient character is totally lost. The south aisle was built (according to the Exeter Registers) in the year 1261, though some of the arches and piers dividing it from the nave are evidently of much earlier date. From this it would appear that the erection of the aisle had been contemplated, and begun soon after the completion of the rest of the church, but for some cause it was not carried on till fifty or sixty years later. The south wall contains one or two examples of early geometrical windows, and an elegant piscina of the same date, but the greater portion of the work is of the 15th

century. In this, as in most Norman buildings, the principal point of attraction is the west front. The doorway set in a kind of shallow porch, with its numerous jamb-shafts, the old cross and the three windows above, the perpendicular tower on the south, and the octagonal one of the 13th century on the north, present a combination rarely surpassed whether viewed archaeologically or artistically. There are one or two other remains of this time which may be noticed for the peculiarity of detail observable in them. Of these the Church of St. Cleer (a few miles from Liskeard) presents a good but simple specimen in its north doorway—now blocked up—the mouldings, especially the chevrons, are bold and effective; the church itself is late in the 14th century, and consists of a nave with two aisles, chancel, and tower, 100 ft. high. Another good and rather uncommon example is the north doorway of the Church of Mylor, a small village opposite Falmouth. The Norman character of this building is preserved, though the windows are chiefly of the 15th century. The church consists of a nave and chancel under one roof with a continuous south aisle, north



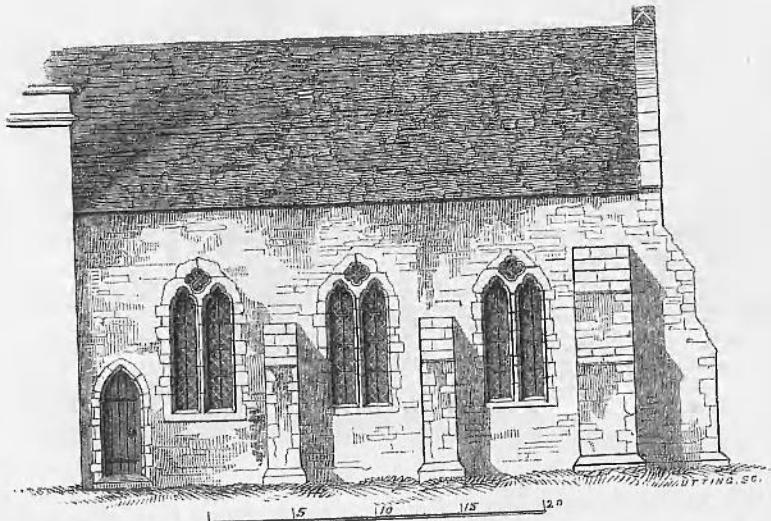
transept and south porch, with a small western tower rising from the roof of the nave. During the early part of the 13th century very little progress was made, and throughout the country the builder's hand seems to have been comparatively

EXAMPLES OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN CORNWALL.



South transept, St. Columb Major.

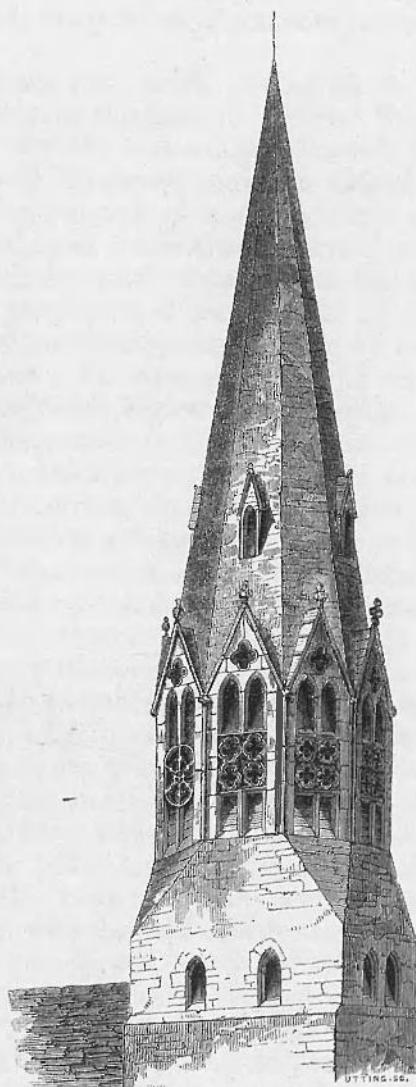
See page 312.



South side of the Chancel, St. Austell.

See page 319.

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Spire of Lostwithiel Church.

idle. The last twenty years of that period, however, witnessed a general change in the architecture of England, and in Cornwall, as in every other county, new churches were erected, many of which more or less entire may yet be noticed.

The chancel and south chapel of the Church of St. Austell belong to this time (*c.* 1290). The latter may be the Chantry for the endowment of which Philip Cornwallis, Archdeacon of Winchester, gave the Church of St. Clether.<sup>1</sup> The building consists of a nave, north and south aisles, chancel, north and south chapels, south porch and tower at the west-end, the whole being—with the exception of the parts before mentioned, of the 15th and 16th centuries. The south side of the chantry chapel is shown in the accompanying illustration ; the east window is of three trefoil-headed lights, the centre one higher and wider than the others. The interior of this portion is strikingly plain ; the arches, two in number, communicating with the chancel, are low, segmental, pointed, of two orders, chamfered, supported in the middle by a short cylindrical column with merely a plain chamfered abacus and base, and on each side by chamfered imposts of an exceedingly rude and unfinished character.

Many other churches in this county possess portions corresponding with the architecture of this time, but I shall only draw attention to one or two examples which may appear especially worthy of our study and consideration. The first of these is the Church of St. Bartholomew Lostwithiel (anciently “Lost-uuidiel”). It is a spacious building consisting of a nave with two aisles, chancel, south porch, and western tower : the body of the church is almost entirely of the 15th and 17th centuries, and presents a wide contrast with the bold effective elegance of the work of the 13th, as seen in the tower and spire—a composition as beautiful as it is unique.<sup>2</sup> The gablets surmounting each side of the octagonal belfry, though of a plain character, produce an effect of richness unsurpassed, in my opinion, by any parapet however richly decorated it may be. The sides of the octagon are pierced by two pointed headed lights (with a quatrefoil in the head), divided by a kind of shaft-mullion, and crossed in the middle by a transom of a somewhat ornate

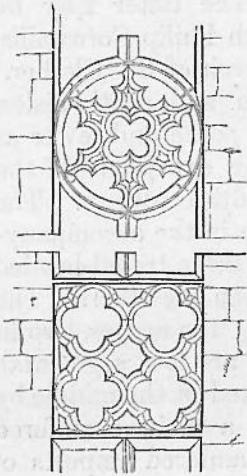
<sup>1</sup> Esch. 20 Edw. I. (1291) Lysons.

<sup>2</sup> I apply this term only as regards

England. It is more than probable the design emanated from Normandy.

description, consisting of a double row of open quatrefoils of bar tracery. The same design appears on each face, except that on the north-east side, the transom is formed by a circle divided into six trefoiled compartments, with a quatrefoil in the centre. Considerable effect is produced at the angles of

the belfry by the introduction of a bold three-quarter round moulding, with a hollow chamfer on each side, and terminating at the top in a head of semi-human character. Immediately below the sills of the windows the diagonal sides of the octagon converge to form the square of the tower, which is divided into two stages, marked on the outside by a set-off in the wall ; the upper story is lighted by two small lancet windows on each side, and the lower is supported on the west side by three buttresses of massive proportions. The inner doorway of the porch is of an early character ; the mouldings are continuous, and the



outer round is enriched with a double band. Near the church are the remains of some old buildings, known by the name of "the prison," which some historians describe as "the Palace of the Dukes of Cornwall." But there is now scarcely any doubt that they are identical with the Hall of Exchequer and other buildings that Edmund Earl of Cornwall erected during the reign of the first Edward. The style of architecture agrees with that prevailing about this time, and the supposition is corroborated by the survey of the Duchy of Cornwall, 2 Edw. III., in which it is described as a "*great hall* and prison." The dimensions of the principal building, as it now stands, are 62 feet by 23 feet 6 inches outside the walls ; it is divided into four bays by two buttresses, those to the west of two stages, and those to the east of three ; the east wall is also flanked by buttresses of three stages. The old windows, with the exception of one narrow square-headed aperture, have been destroyed, and new ones of two lights with a quatrefoil in the head inserted, but whether faithful restorations appears doubtful.

The history of this building assists us in coming to some

conclusion with regard to the church ; that they were built nearly about the same time (1280) is evident, both from the masonry and architectural character, and we have strong presumptive evidence in favour of this from the fact that, prior to the Earldom of Cornwall being vested in Edmund, son of Earl Richard and nephew to Henry III. Lost withiel was a comparatively insignificant place, and it would therefore be highly improbable to suppose that the inhabitants of so small a village should erect a building of such architectural pretensions, as the original church<sup>3</sup> must undoubtedly have been.

The Church of St. Columb Major, formerly Collegiate<sup>4</sup> (a rectory in the Deanery of Pyder, Hundred of Pyder), is one of the largest ecclesiastical buildings in the county, and may justly claim a high rank, not only for its size and general completeness, but for its great beauty and singularity. It consists of a chancel<sup>5</sup> and aisles, transepts, nave, and aisles north and south, porches and tower at the west end. The main portion of the building, viz., the walls, the arches, and piers of the nave and south chancel aisle, the doorways, and a few windows on the south side, belong to the reign of Edward I., and to the style or period called by some "Early Decorated" or "Geometrical." The east front is formed by the three gable ends of the chancel and its aisles, the centre window is "debased Perpendicular," the windows of the south aisle are all of three lights, the centre light rising to the apex of the window arch ; these windows, though still retaining their original outline, have been considerably damaged by injudicious "repairs ;" the jambs are recessed and, together with the scionson arches and mullions, are simply chamfered. This aisle is separated from the chancel by two early arches (supported by a pier and responds with good moulded capitals and bases) and communicates with the south transept by a segmental pointed arch. This transept is, perhaps, the most interesting portion of the church. It is supported on the exterior by buttresses of bold proportions, divided into three stages, and is lighted by a four-light

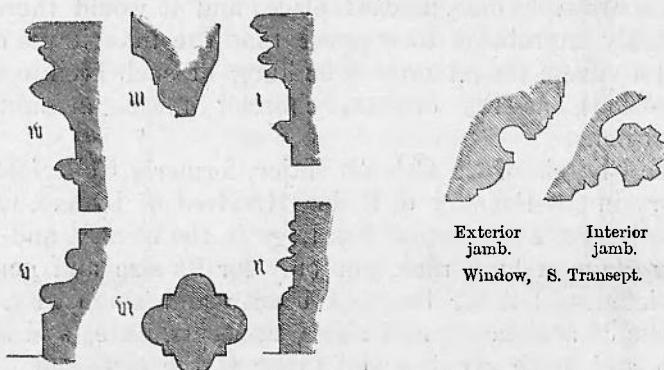
<sup>3</sup> According to Dugdale, the Church was materially injured by an explosion of gunpowder, and by the conduct of Essex's soldiers during their stay there in 1644.

<sup>4</sup> The College buildings which adjoined the churchyard were burnt down by acci-

dent in 1701. The site had been inhabited by black monks.

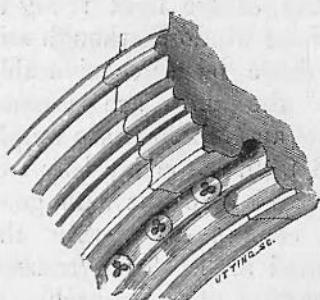
<sup>5</sup> Originally the *Chancel* projected another bay eastward to the extent of about ten feet, making the length equal to about four-fifths of that of the nave.

window in the south wall, which, from its proximity to the ground, appears somewhat out of place ; this is owing to the ground having accumulated two or three feet above its original level. This window is the only one retaining its original stone work entire ; the jambs (see woodcuts) and



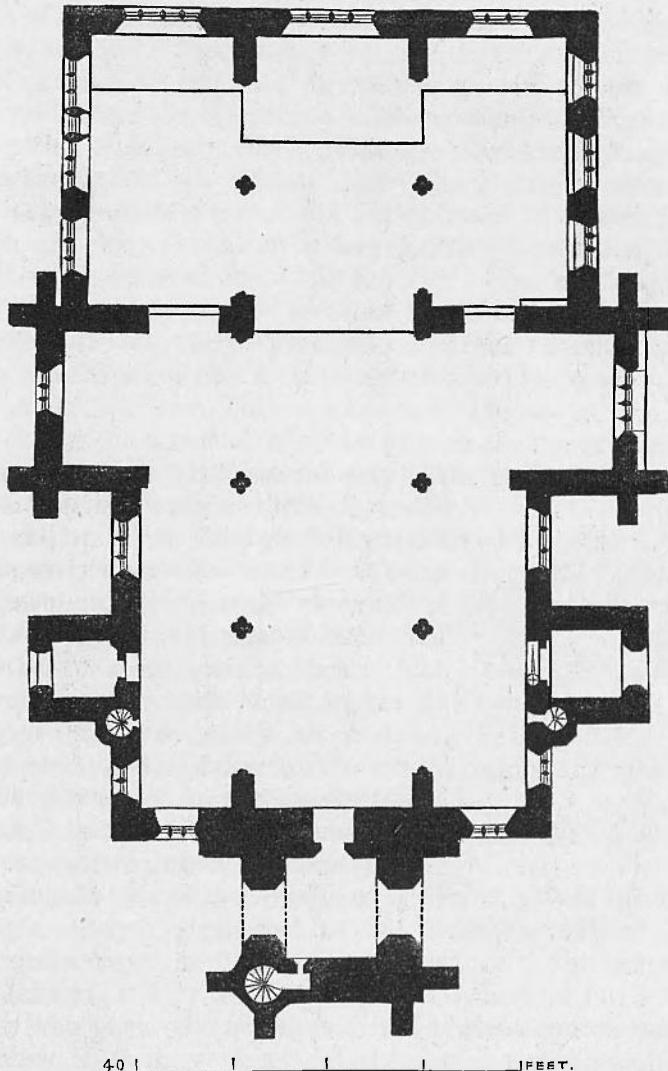
Exterior jamb.      Interior jamb.  
Window, S. Transept.

mullions, which are continuous, are remarkable for the minute character of the mouldings, which is still more observable in the caps and bases (figs. 1, and 2,) of the pillars supporting the scionson arch (fig. 3.) the shafts themselves are of most uncommon character, as the accompanying illustration will prove. The porches in their general arrangement are



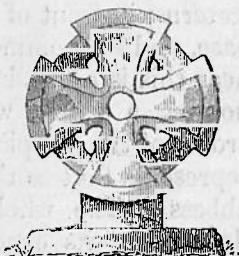
alike, though the inner doorway of the south porch is of a more embellished character ; the arch mouldings, of two orders, are continuous, but the ball-flower enrichment is confined to the arch. The stone lying between the jambs of this doorway is evidently antecedent to the date of the present structure. It appears to be sepulchral, the remains of a cross enclosed within a circle being still visible. The outer entrance of the porch is of two orders, with bold chamfers ; above the porches are parvises, with octagonal staircase turrets, communicating with the aisles by pointed headed doorways. The tower is lofty, but presents no other feature worthy of observation, if we except the ground story,

EXAMPLES OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN CORNWALL.



Ground Plan of the Church of St. Columb Major.

which (as shown in the plan) is open to the north and south, and has an entrance to the church eastward, and another to the turret in the west wall, an arrangement not frequently met with. The nave is divided from the aisles and transepts by three arches of rather wide proportions, supported on piers of a quatrefoil section, with good moulded capitals and bases (see *ante*, figs. 4, 5, 6,) : the latter are below the level of the floor, but have an open space left around them. The arches are doubly recessed, having the quarter round in the place of the chamfer. There is no clerestory and the roofs throughout are of late date ; there are the remains of an early wooden screen, with some traces of colour ; and there still exist, though in a very mutilated condition, many of the old seats of the 15th century. The north side of the church is much the same as the south, excepting the absence of all early windows, and the north chancel aisle or chapel, which is entirely of the 15th century, and has evidently been built on the foundations of one corresponding in age and style to that on the south side. In the churchyard, a little to the east of the chancel, is a stone cross (not more than three feet one inch high), which may probably mark the resting place of a founder or benefactor ; one can scarcely recognise it as belonging to that class of memorials known as "churchyard crosses." The manor of St. Columb Major originally belonged to the priory at Bodmin, from which it descended to the family of the Arundells, in whose possession it continued till the beginning of the present century, when it was purchased by Thomas Rawlings, Esq., of Padstow. It is probable that a church, dedicated to St. Columba, existed here long antecedent to the present structure. The Arundell Chapel was built by Renfrey Arundell, who died in 1310, to about which time the building of the present church may be referred ; that the architect of the chapel was the author of the rest of the work, though, perhaps, under different employers, seems a question upon which there can be little doubt. The present dilapidated and altered state of the windows, as well as the loss of the stained glass, the screens



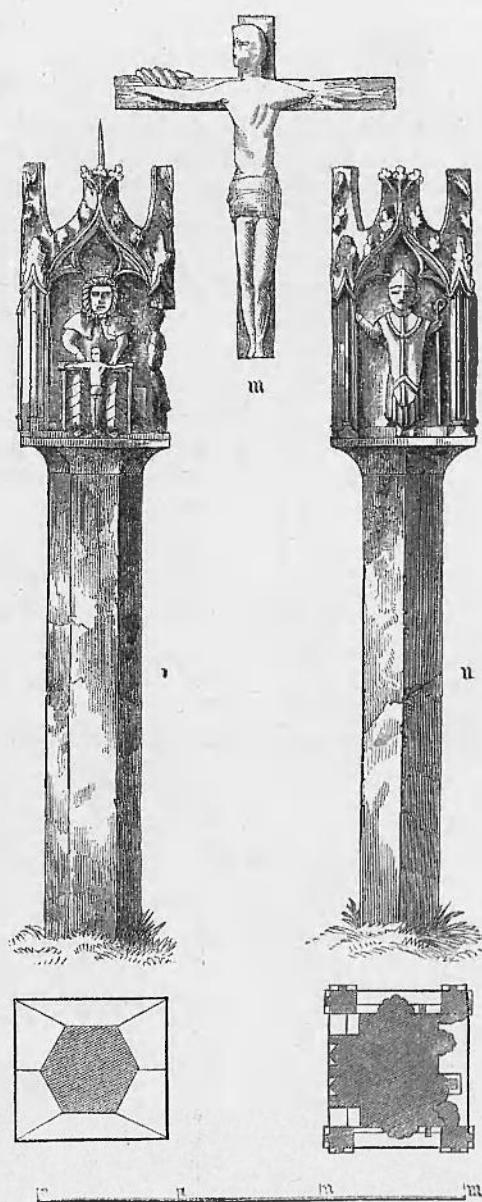
Stone Cross, in the church-yard, St. Columb.

and rood loft, and the monument of Renfrey Arundell, are to be attributed to an accident which happened in the year 1676 ; a large quantity of gunpowder belonging to the parish and kept in the rood loft, having ignited, was the cause of the ruin so much to be deplored. From the records formerly in the Augmentation Office, it appears that Sir John Arundell, in the reign of Henry VI., founded a chantry for five priests in a chapel called the Arundell Chapel, allowing the warden £6 13*s.* 4*d.*, and the other four chaplains £5 6*s.* 8*d.* per annum.

About three miles from St. Columb is the small village of Lanhern, or Mawgan in Pyder ; the church itself presents little to arrest the attention. The churchyard cross, however, is an interesting and beautiful memorial of the 14th century. The accompanying woodcuts will explain its form and general character. The subject on the west side (as shown in fig. 1.) represents God the Father as an aged man enthroned, holding up a little image of the crucifix, not more than six and a half inches in length (see fig. 3). The east side is occupied by a legendary subject, in which a King and Queen are introduced, the latter kneeling at a lectern ; in front of the King is a small shaft with a moulded base, and the commencement of three ribs of a groined roof ; near this is a mutilated figure of an angel who appears to be holding a scroll, which, encircling the pillar, rises to the crown of the suppliant Queen. The other two sides (fig. 2 represents that to the north) present figures of an abbot and abbess. The whole of the work is remarkable for the delicacy of its execution and its high degree of preservation, though it is to be regretted that wantonness and curiosity should have injured an interesting monument, which had suffered little from the decay of time, or the over-zealous iconoclasts of the times of the Reformation or the Commonwealth.

E. W. GODWIN.

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Churchyard Cross, Lanhern, or Mawgan in Pyder.