

The Saxon Window in Mugginton Church.

By PERCY H. CURREY, *Hon. Secretary.*

I.

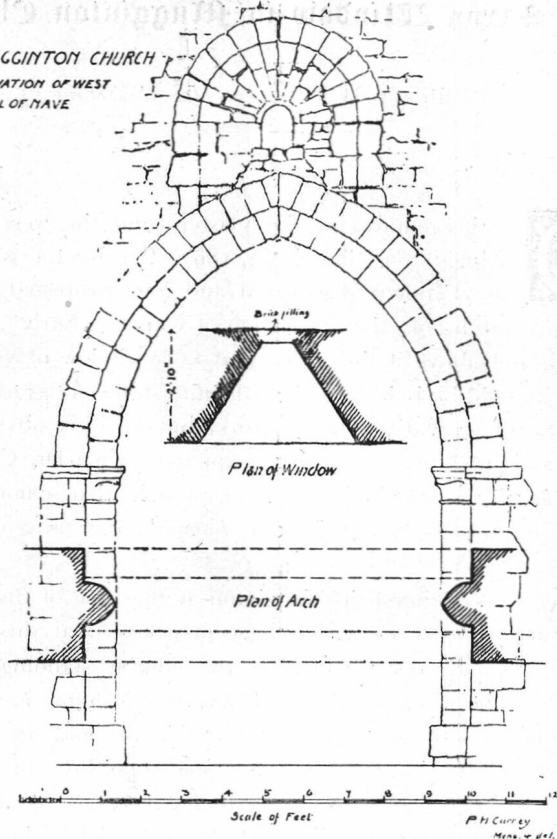


ON the removal of the plaster from the west wall of Mugginton Church in 1897, the Rector (the Rev. R. Feilden) discovered and had re-opened a tower arch of the transition (Norman—Early English) period, and above it the upper part of a window of very early date; it would be bold to make a definite statement as to whether it is Saxon or early Norman work, but as it is obviously of great antiquity, and as it was not apparent when Dr. Cox wrote the *Churches of Derbyshire*, I have thought that a notice of it might be worth a place in our *Journal*, and prove of some interest.

There was a church in Mugginton at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086 A.D.), and it seems likely that this window is the original west window of the church standing at that period. The window consists of a narrow opening on the outer face of the wall, with widely-splayed jambs and arch inside; the external head appears to be of one stone, but unfortunately it cannot be properly examined, being covered by a wooden casing in the tower, and blocked up with bricks; the plane of the glass or wooden shutter must have been close to the outer face of the wall. These characteristics are consistent either with Saxon or early Norman work, but the jointing of the arch stones and the general appearance of the wall are certainly suggestive of the earlier period. The wall itself is 2 ft. 10 ins.

thick—1 ft. less than the other walls of the tower. This point, again, does not lead to any certain conclusion, the thickness being less than was common in Norman work, but not so little as to point definitely to the Saxon period. The construction of the wall is rough rubble work. The date of the tower itself

MUGGINTON CHURCH
ELEVATION OF WEST
WALL OF NAVE



is a little puzzling; it is faced with good ashlar, the walls being 3 ft. 10 ins. thick. In the west wall is a circular headed doorway, now blocked up and nearly covered by a later buttress. In the north wall is a belfry window, having a plain circular un moulded arch, enclosing two narrow-

pointed lights. Above this window is a cornice of distinctly Norman character. The arch into the nave is of very similar character to the belfry window, but if it is part of the original design of the tower, it is difficult to understand why the old wall was retained at all, as it is nearly all cut away; possibly it was cut through after the tower was built, unless it is one of those singular feats of under-building in which the mediæval masons, though having little reverence for the work of their predecessors, seemed to take such a strange delight. The towers in this particular corner of Derbyshire are worth noting as an instance of the prevalence of local feeling among mediæval builders: Mugginton, Hognaston, Kirk Ireton, Bradbourne, Brassington, Tissington, and Thorpe, all adjacent parishes, possess churches with low square-looking towers, very similar in general appearance, and all apparently built in the twelfth or very early in the thirteenth centuries; whether this is a case of mere copying, or due to the employment of the same architect or master mason, is an interesting problem. Similar instances of local characteristics in different periods may be noted in several cases, even within so small an area as the single county of Derby.

By the REV. J. CHARLES COX, LL.D., F.S.A.

II.

Having had the advantage of seeing Mr. Currey's drawing of the interesting early window uncovered at Mugginton church in 1897, and having read his careful paper, I have little or no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that it is of the pre-Norman period. It is probably of tenth or early eleventh century date. One reason, in addition to those advanced by Mr. Currey, for this conclusion is that it would be highly improbable that substantial work of a post-Conquest date would be upset at so early a date as about 1200, which I take to be the approximate year of the transition tower arch. I have more than once noted pre-Norman work in a like position, that is, in the east wall of the tower, which had originally served

as the west wall of the first stone church when there was no tower. There is a most interesting early Saxon window in this position hidden away in the tower of the small church of Wansford, Northants, and known only to very few.

The practical ecclesiologist is on the look-out for pre-Norman work in elevated positions, particularly over nave arcades. During the current year I found two cases of this kind in country churches in Norfolk. There are many more remnants of Saxon stone churches than are usually suspected; I have learnt much since I wrote on the churches of Derbyshire.

With regard to the curious and ingenious underbuilding, in which, as Mr. Currey remarks, the mediæval church builder seemed to delight, and which can be seen in massive minsters such as Beverley, as well as in so many parochial churches, I think the following is the true explanation. The mediæval priest dare not suffer the continued round of Eucharistic and other services to be interrupted when there was rebuilding or an extension of the fabric; he could not take a holiday at such times, nor had he a schoolroom for temporary purposes. Hence much skill was used in sustaining, as far as possible, the fabric whilst the alterations were in progress, and in causing them to be undertaken in sections.

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