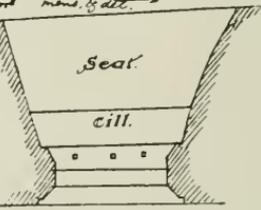


Addington Ch. Surrey.
Part of South Wall of Chancel.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 feet.



Plan of Lowside W^z

FRONTISPIECE.

THE LOW SIDE WINDOWS OF SURREY
CHURCHES:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

SOME REMARKS UPON THE RESTORATION OF
WARLINGHAM CHURCH.

BY PHILIP MAINWARING JOHNSTON.

HAVING contributed two papers on "The Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches" to the *Collections* of the Sussex Archæological Society, I have been asked to write a paper upon the examples of these peculiar openings to be found in the Churches of Surrey: and to some extent the general observations here set down are a repetition of the matter contained in those papers.¹

The present paper, however, must be considered only as a first instalment towards a complete treatment of the subject as far as Surrey is concerned, as the time at my disposal since I undertook to write upon it has not allowed of my visiting a large number of churches in the county, in which there is, or has been at some time, a low side window.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact that, with all the flood of light cast upon the archæology of our town and village churches during the last sixty years, no satisfactory explanation has yet been agreed upon as to the original intention and use of low side windows, commonly called leper windows, or lychnoscopes, by the favourers of certain theories. So far, indeed, as a general consensus of opinion upon any one of the numerous theories that have been advanced is concerned, the

¹ *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vols. XLI and XLII.

low side window is as much a *vexata questio* as it was fifty years ago, when the late J. H. Parker contributed to *The Archaeological Journal* an admirably written and illustrated article on the subject.¹ This article, in which Mr. Parker reviewed impartially no less than twelve then prevalent theories, remains the most weighty contribution to the literature upon the low side window controversy that has yet been attempted, and is the high water mark of our knowledge. The old facts and theories, it is true, have been re-presented from time to time, as fresh examples have been discovered, in one or another of the publications devoted to general or local archæology,² but archæologists still seem hopelessly hazy and divided in opinion as to the origin of this peculiar opening. The Kent Society's volumes contain, besides a few casual references to examples in that county, a solitary paper upon one of exceptional interest.³ As a feature in our churches, the low side window is occasionally mentioned in the *Collections* of the other county archæological societies:⁴ in our own it occurs six or seven times, but in no case is the reference more than casual, nor is much said to assist us in discovering the originating cause and use or uses of these peculiar openings.

My own feeling is that we are only likely to solve this problem in two ways; (1) by describing and illustrating examples over such a wide area as that of a county—thus obtaining a fair idea of the varied characteristics and dates of a group of low side windows; and (2) by

¹ *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 154.

² *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. XI, p. 33; Vol. XLVI, p. 151; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1844 and 1846; *The Reliquary*, Vol. XXIV, *Mediæval Confessionals*, by J. L. André, Esq.; *The Antiquary*, Vol. XXI, pp. 122 and 217; various contributions to *The Ecclesiologist*; and in *The Associated Architectural Societies Reports*, Vols. I, VI, VII and VIII, &c.

³ *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. IX, p. 236; Doddington Church, Vol. V, p. 18; and Vol. XIV, p. 22.

⁴ To give all these references would be "a large order," and hardly necessary in this place. Incidentally, two are worth recording from *The Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club*, Vols. XIV, p. 37, and XVIII, p. 55.

diligently searching documentary sources of information likely to throw any light upon their origin and use. In both these directions the importance of mutual help and co-operation cannot be over-estimated. A task that might seem impossible to solitary units assumes a very different aspect when they unite to accomplish it. If such information, suggestions, or helpful criticism were sent by the members of this and other archaeological societies to the secretary and duly sifted, I cannot help thinking that we should arrive at a solution of this vexed question, besides incidentally gathering a mass of facts of great interest to the ecclesiologist.

With so much by way of introduction, I will pass on to the more immediate subject of my paper.

The term "low side window" is, like a good deal of the nomenclature of the Gothic revival, not to be defended upon its merits. Its chief recommendation is its colourlessness, and that it does not commit us to any one of the theories of origin around which so much controversy has been waged: but as a descriptive title its correctness is somewhat doubtful; for a low side window is not invariably either "low" or "side," and *never* in its primary intention a "window."

The late Mr. M. H. Bloxam's description presents a fair idea of the general characteristics of this feature:—

"The peculiar low side window," he writes, "common in some districts, especially in churches erected in the 13th and 14th centuries,¹ is generally found in the south wall of the chancel, near the south-west angle, but sometimes on the opposite side, and occasionally even in one of the aisles, at no great distance from the ground, and frequently beneath a large window. These low side windows, or the lower portions of them, we commonly find closed up with masonry; and, on examination, they appear not to have been glazed, but externally covered with an iron grating, with a wooden shutter, opening inwardly, the hinges of which are

¹ But often found inserted in the walls of still earlier buildings; e. g., an Early English low side window in a Norman wall is commonly met with.

frequently left imbedded in the masonry, though the wooden shutters seldom remain."¹

To this it is only necessary to add that *two* low side windows are not infrequently met with in one church, usually facing each other in either wall of the chancel; also that examples are sometimes found in the western wall of the nave or of one of the aisles; that the internal cills are almost invariably flat, and sometimes have a niche cut for standing therein; and that the period of occurrence of low side windows is, roughly speaking, between A.D. 1240 and 1460—or rather over two centuries—before and after which dates examples are very rarely found. From this last fact it will be seen that the use or uses to which these openings were put must have died out, or very much declined, some time before the Reformation.

The following list of low side windows in Surrey has been drawn up with the valued assistance of my friend, Mr. Ambrose P. Boyson, a member of the Council of this Society. It must be regarded as tentative only, many of the examples named being no longer in existence, and others doubtful as to the fact of their being low side windows in the technical sense of the term. Instances of these openings occurring in the eastern part of the south wall of an aisle will be noted in two or three churches, as well as the oft-quoted example at St. Mary's, Guildford, where we meet with a low window in the west wall of the north aisle. The order in which the churches are here set down is roughly from west to east of the county.

ASH.	THURSLEY.
HORSELL.	HAMBLEDON.
WOKING.	CHIDDINGFOLD.
SEND.	DUNSFOLD.
RIPLEY.	ALFOLD.
COMPTON.	GUILDFORD, ST. MARY'S.

¹ *Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 11th Edition, Vol. II, p. 127.

ALBURY.
 WOTTON.
 OCKLEY.
 MICKLEHAM.
 EAST CLANDON.
 LITTLE BOOKHAM.
 GREAT BOOKHAM.

WALTON-ON-THE-HILL.
 BURSTOW.
 CROWHURST.
 LIMPSFIELD.
 TATSFIELD.
 WARLINGHAM.
 ADDINGTON.

I shall only attempt at the present time a detailed description of some of the low side windows occurring in these churches. Sixteen examples have been personally visited. Of the remainder, some are set down on the authority of Cracklow's *Surrey Churches*, while others are known to me only by notices which have appeared in the volumes of this Society's *Collections*.

ASH.—See Cracklow. His drawing shows a two-light, square-headed Perpendicular window, with the lower part blocked, set low down in the wall close to the western end of the south wall of the chancel. There is a priest's door hard by.

HORSELL.—See *S. A. C.*, Vol. VII, p. 154. The small window there mentioned as existing in the south wall of the chancel is conjectured by the writer of the article to have been originally the entrance to the rood-loft. My own impression when I visited the church some years ago was that it was a low side window, but I cannot confirm this supposition, having made no drawing or measurements.

WOKING.—The low side window here, shown in Cracklow's view, is alluded to in Mr. Ralph Nevill's paper on the church, an abstract of which is printed in Vol. VII of these *Collections* (p. ix).

SEND.—What *may* have been a low side window appears on the north side of the nave, close to its eastern end, in Cracklow's view. It is a small square-headed opening. Windows in this position, however,

were sometimes inserted in post-Reformation times to light the pulpit.

RIPLEY.—A low side window is shown in Cracklow's drawing of this church as existing in the usual position, the south-west corner of the chancel—an Early English erection. It is a square-headed oblong opening, very near the ground, the windows proper being broad lancets: the opening appears to have had an iron grille.

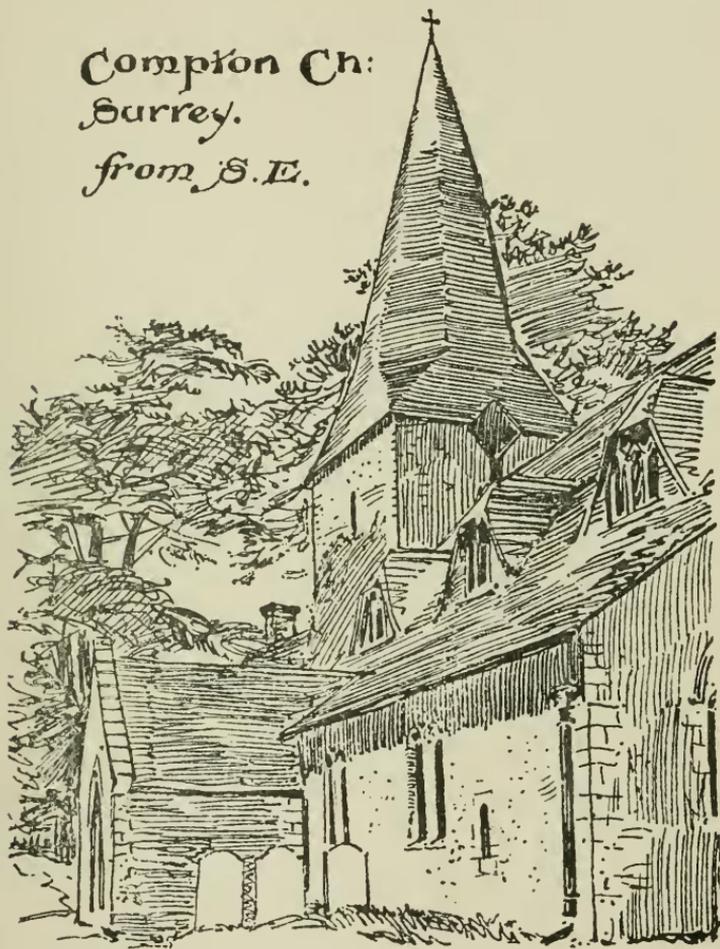
COMPTON.—I give this example mainly on the authority of my friend Mr. J. L. André,¹ who says in his interesting paper upon this remarkable church:—"In the south wall of the south aisle is a blocked-up Norman lancet, set very low down, which has probably been a lychnoscope."² It is ten years since I visited this church, and I can only speak generally as to this window, shown in the accompanying sketch. I have no memoranda as to its dimensions, and whether it is rebated for a shutter; only a note as to its being a small round-headed opening, blocked up on the inside, where, however, there are traces of a square head to the splayed jambs. It is certainly low down in the wall, the adjoining Decorated piscina, which I sketched at the time, rising above its head. Pewing obscures the bottom of the opening. From its character this little window may just as well have been an ordinary Norman window in the low wall (which was raised to its present height in the Decorated period) of the aisle. Precisely similar windows exist in the low aisle walls of the late Norman churches of Icklesham and Bishopstone, Sussex: only in these cases there is a row of them, not a single example as at Compton. Low side windows, for which

¹ *Surrey Archæological Collections*, Vol. XII, p. 11.

² These low side windows were dubbed "lychnoscopes" by the Cambridge Camden Society, and to some extent the name has stuck to them. Mr. André, however, does not appear to use the term as implying any belief in the theory which it represents—now generally discredited. His views upon this question entirely correspond with my own.

a date within the 12th century is claimed, are exceedingly rare, and some of these on examination prove to be in reality of later date: there are, perhaps, half-a-dozen all

Compton Ch:
Surrey.
from S.E.



P.M.J.

told in England.¹ In addition to this little window in the south aisle there is one, now of two lights, with a pointed internal head, apparently of 13th century date,

¹ *E. g.*, Binsey, Oxfordshire; North Hinksey, Berks; St. Peter's, Northampton; and Cockfield, Durham.

in the south-west angle of the chancel—the usual position for a low side window. A squint, at present blocked, pierces its western jamb. The cill is flat, as in so many low side windows, but the character of the opening outside being so entirely altered makes it difficult to say whether it has originally been a low side window. As will be seen in Mr. André's plan, only the western jamb is splayed: the other has been made square to insert the present outer opening, which takes the place of a simple lancet. Altogether, I should like to see these windows again before pronouncing either of them to belong to the class we are considering.

THURSLEY.—Cracklow's drawing shows what *may* have been a low side window, with its lower part blocked, as the westernmost of two broad lancets in the south wall of the chancel.

HAMBLEDON.—What looks like a low side window, in the usual place in the chancel, appears in Cracklow's view. It is shown as a broad lancet, chamfered and rebated, and having an iron stancheon and cross-bars. In the eastern part of the nave there is also a square-headed window, low in the wall, with a wooden frame, but this would seem to be a "churchwarden" insertion.

CHIDDINGFOLD.—The late Major Heales, F.S.A., has given us a most excellent account of this interesting church in Vol. V of these *Collections*, wherein occurs a description of the low side window (or "lychnoscope," as he also calls it), and a drawing of the south side of the church, as well as a plan of the building generally. These show the south wall of the chancel to be occupied by a priest's door and five long lancet windows "about 11 ft. high, though only 1 ft. 3½ in. wide." Under the westernmost of these is the low side window, separated from it by a stone transome and originally closed with a shutter. "The dimensions of the opening are 3 ft. 3 in. high × 1 ft. 3½ in. wide:" but it does not appear in Major Heales's sketch, owing, no doubt, to its having

been blocked until the restoration. I was occupied at my visit to the church in 1888 with sketching other features, and am unable to supplement these particulars with either pen or pencil: but one statement in Major Heales's account appears to me open to question, viz., that the date of the chancel and other parts of the building is "somewhere about, or rather earlier than, the year 1200." From my own sketches and notes I should be inclined to place them thirty to fifty years later. Certainly the low side window itself, which is probably of the same date as the lancet over it, is very unlikely to be so early, and the whole character of the beautiful Early English work of the chancel and chantry chapel is strikingly similar in design and details to that of a group of churches in south-west Sussex which I have good grounds for dating between 1230-60. There is every probability that Chiddingfold was erected by the same school of masons. I have only met with three other sub-transome low side windows in Surrey, though they are by no means uncommon in other counties. Sussex furnishes four of this type, so far as my observation goes.

DUNSFOLD.—See Cracklow and Vol. XIII of these *Collections*. In the former, and in the illustration which accompanies Mr. André's account in the latter, what I take to have been another type of low side window appears as the westernmost of the two windows which, with a priest's door, occupy the south wall of the chancel. These windows, in common with the rest of this graceful little cruciform church, are beautiful examples of Geometrical Decorated. The cill of the westernmost is some two feet or more lower than the other, their heads being at the same level, and this induces me to think that in such cases there may have been some form of shutter or opening casement in the lower part of the window, answering to the shuttered opening found below a transome in another class of low side windows. Not being personally acquainted with this church, I can only offer this as a suggestion so far

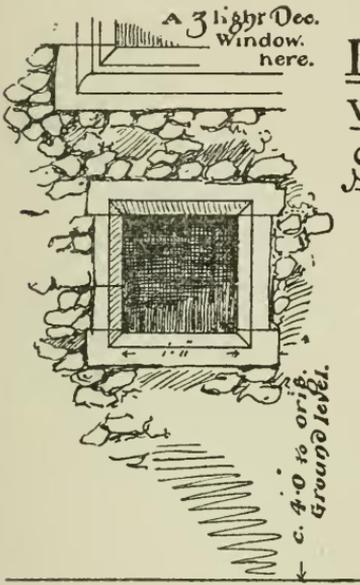
as Dunsfold is concerned: in doing so, however, I may observe that the eminent antiquary Sir Henry Dryden has lately expressed his entire concurrence with the view I have taken as to this class of low side windows.

ALFOLD.—Cracklow's drawing shows, what is not so plainly visible in Mr. Ralph Nevill's charming little sketch in Vol. VI, *S. A. C.*, p. 11, that the two-light Perpendicular window in the south wall of the chancel served in all likelihood the peculiar purpose of a low side window. If the former representation be correct as regards the pre-restoration appearance of the building, this window must have been shifted to a more easterly position and shortened when the church was restored in 1845.

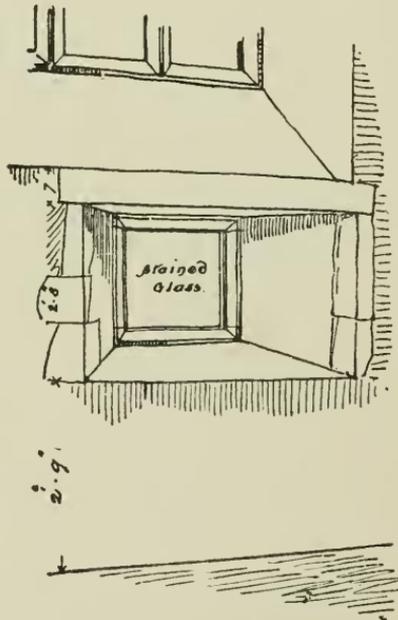
GUILDFORD, ST. MARY'S.—A careful set of measured drawings of this church is a great desideratum for these *Collections*. One wonders why the late J. H. Parker's paper with its excellent drawings to scale has not been reprinted therein from *The Archaeological Journal*.¹ This account is everything that could be desired, except for the learned author's prejudice against allowing the existence of Saxon stone architecture, which has led him to explain away the obviously pre-Conquest characteristics of the central tower. The low side window here is a plain square opening in the west wall of the north aisle of the nave, 1 ft. 11 in. square, and its cill about 4 ft. from the original ground level. The present stonework of the outside is Bath, and new, but a reproduction of the Reigate stone opening in the original work. It is glazed at present, and the rebate for the shutter on the inside is only $\frac{3}{8}$ in. square—an absurdity if it were meant to hang a shutter in, and an instance of the carelessness with which old work is reproduced in "restoration." The internal jambs and head are ancient, the former being in Reigate stone, and the latter a slab of Sussex marble: the cill, which is not

¹ Vol. XXIX, p. 170.

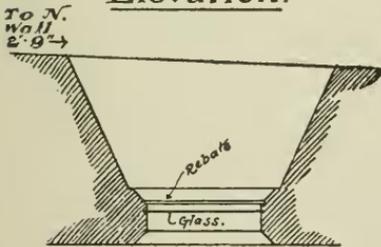
quite flat, is 2 ft. 9 in. from the floor. Altogether this peculiar opening has the appearance of being 14th century work, and it is placed below a large three-light Decorated window, but quite out of the centre of it.



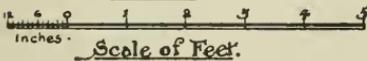
Low side window,
W. wall of N. Aisle,
S^t Mary's Guildford.



Elevation.



Plan.



Internal Sketch.

P. W. Johnston
mens. & del. Dec. 88.

Its position in the west wall of a north aisle is paralleled by the examples at Dartford, Kent, and Stanford-le-Hope, Essex; while at Buxted, Sussex, there is a 15th

century example in a corresponding place in the south aisle. Our valued contributor, Mr. André,¹ also instances a western low window as occurring at Ludham Church, Norfolk, in the nave, immediately under the west window, and in place of the usual doorway. This window, which is at present blocked, is said to resemble a wide lancet, and has the head simply trefoiled: under its cill is a piece of moulded string-course, placed at a height suitable for a person to kneel before the window and look through it.

This and other peculiarities frequently found in connection with low side windows all point to the fact that the purpose (or purposes) for which they were constructed was one connected with *external*, as well as internal, approach to the opening. Mr. Parker in the account of this church above-mentioned says,—“At the west end of the north aisle is a small square window under the larger west window, and this is of the character called a ‘Leper’s window’; it had, until the last few years, only an iron grating and a shutter, and no glass. It is not the usual position for a window of this class, and is supposed to indicate that there was a lepers’ hospital near this end of the church.” And on another page he says,—“There is some reason to think that there was a large wooden porch or Galilee at the west end along the whole of the west front Towards the north end² of the porch is a niche for an image, and towards the south end of it an aperture through the wall, apparently a leper’s window, and it would seem that this Galilee porch was used as a chapel for the lepers, who were not allowed to enter the church. But we have no evidence of a lepers’ hospital at Guildford, though this has been commonly assumed; and the name of Spital Street was supposed to be connected with it.” The niche of which Mr. Parker speaks has an elegant cinquefoiled head and is of the same date as the

¹ *The Archæological Journal*, Vol. XLVI, p. 151.

² This is evidently a mistake for “south”—the niche spoken of occurring at that end; and the “south” later on in the sentence should obviously be “north.”

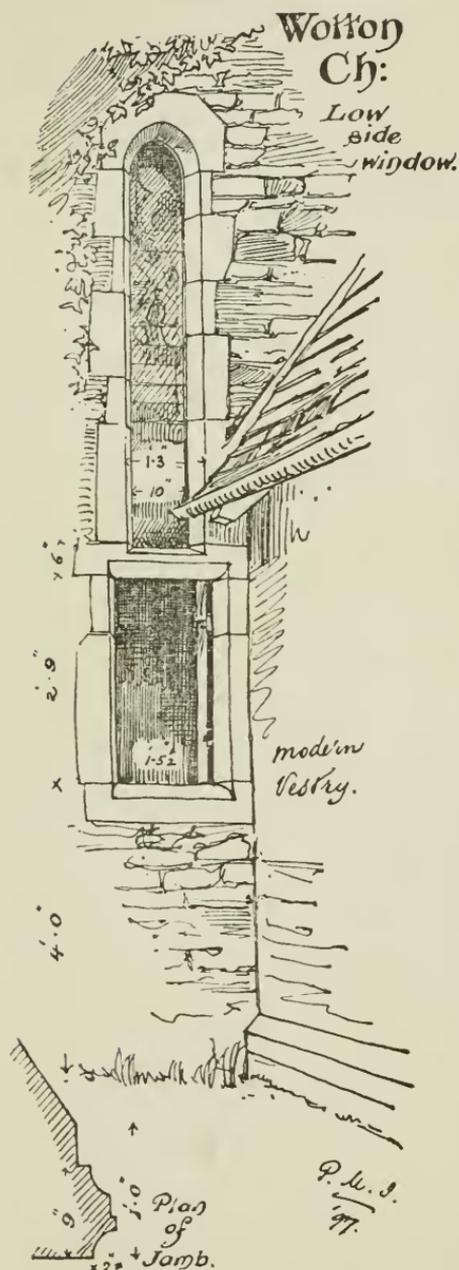
three-light Decorated window and the opening below, *i.e.*, about 1320.

Another instance of the supposed connection of lepers with these grated and shuttered openings has recently come under my notice. In this case a "low side window" (though here this cumbrous term seems more than usually inept) occurs in the west wall of the north transept of Tarrant Rushton Church, Dorset, in addition to one in the ordinary position in the chancel. Both were blocked until the restoration. That in the transept is a plain narrow lancet, of early thirteenth century date, its external cill close to the ground, and the flat internal cill originally at about sitting height from the floor. Adjoining it is a narrow door called by the old folk of the village "The Lepers' gate"—an interesting evidence of the reliability of popular tradition in remote places, when considered in the light of the fact that immediately westward of this transept was a lepers' hospital (the foundations of which remain) going down the slope of the bank on which the church is built to the Tarrant stream below. The transept itself was originally partitioned off from the nave, and its floor was some two feet lower, the probability being that it served as a separate chapel to the hospital.¹ I must return to this question of the possible connection of lepers and low side windows at a later part of this paper.

ALBURY.—In Mr. André's paper on Compton Church in Vol. XII of these *Collections*, the late Dr. Neale is quoted as authority for the existence of a "lychnoscope" similarly placed to that at Compton, *i.e.*, in the eastern part of the south wall of the south aisle. I have not yet had an opportunity of verifying this statement by a personal visit; but enquiries on the spot, made through a friend, show that the low side window, almost hidden

¹ Some of these particulars were communicated to me at a visit paid to this very interesting church, by the Rector, the Rev. J. Penny, whose paper thereupon in Vol. XVIII of the *Dorset Field Club* I have cited above.

by ivy, is in the usual place, the south-west corner of the *chancel*, which is now boarded up and about to be repaired. It is to be hoped that the low side window will be preserved.



WOTTON.—Wotton Church was “restored” in the dark days of the “fifties,” and the low side window, of which I give an illustration, was then discovered. Probably, in common with the rest of the wrought stonework, it was originally executed in the soft calcareous sandstone so much quarried round Reigate and Godstone in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. The architect employed, however, saw fit to renew the external dressings in that peculiarly unsympathetic material, Bath stone: the dimensions of the lancet window and of the oblong opening below are, however, the same as those of the old work. A shutter was placed in the opening at the restoration. The section of the jambs (as will be seen in the illustration) is a hollow,

rebated on the inside for the shutter, while the head as well as the cill is chamfered—a somewhat unusual treatment. The lancet under which the opening occurs is the westernmost of three in the south wall of the chancel, the two others being coupled: all are of the same height from cill to ground, so that the opening is the more conspicuous. Its internal cill is flat and about 3ft. 6in. from the floor. The outer cill, which is about 3in. higher, is 4ft. from the ground. There is little in its restored state to indicate precisely the date of this opening. I incline, however, to think it coeval with the lancet over, which in common with the rest of the chancel goes back to about 1250. The early work of the tower and the curious south door are very interesting features of this church.

OCKLEY.—See Cracklow's drawing, where an oblong rectangular opening appears low down in the south wall of the nave at its eastern extremity, and apparently close to the west face of the chancel arch. Low side windows are frequently noticeable for their extreme plainness of design and rudeness of construction—as though inserted hastily, for a supposedly temporary purpose, or against the will of the party or parties concerned in their making: and therefore they may often at first sight—especially when seen merely in a drawing—be confounded with a much more modern class of openings, such as were knocked through the walls of our churches in the churchwarden period. As I have suggested in other cases, so in this instance also, the opening may have been a post-Reformation alteration, to give light to the pulpit or an important parishioner's pew; but on the evidence of the drawing it may just as probably have been a low side window. Only a visit to the actual building will decide the point,—that is, if the opening still exists!

MICKLEHAM.—The former existence of a low side window in the south-west corner of the chancel here is plainly determined by a reference to the plan, section

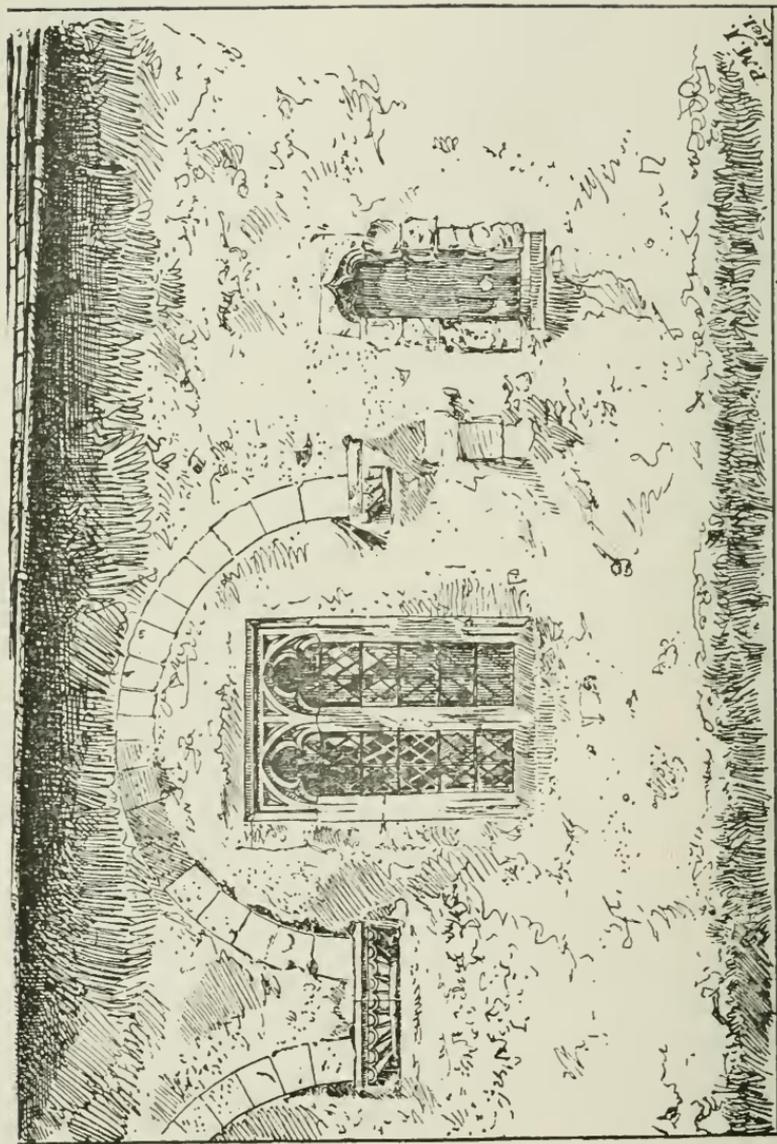
and perspective sketch, in a curious monograph published upon this church in the early part of the century, for the knowledge of which I am indebted to Mr. Boyson.¹ Prior to seeing this work I had visited the church, and found the place where the low side window had been occupied by an aggressively modern "Norman" stair turret, which, together with the east wall, dated from a "restoration" in 1872. The original east window (which Mr. André compares with that of Dorking old church²) and the low side window both belonged to the later Decorated period, *c.* 1350. The latter was of two lights with ogee-cinquefoiled heads and a quatrefoil in the pointed arch above. The lower half of the lights was blocked up, and internally the jambs, perhaps anciently, had been cut down, a large pew being placed in the recess thus formed. The plan seems to indicate that there was a rebate for a shutter internally. I have met with several instances of the internal jambs or splay of these windows being carried down to the floor—or what is the same thing a niche for standing in being cut out of the cill. Of the former, Hamsey Church, near Lewes, and the well-known example at Doddington, Kent, may be cited:³ while of the latter class we shall presently consider an instance at Warlingham in this county. The obvious motive for these recesses in low side window cills was for the person using the window on the inside to approach quite close to the external opening.

EAST CLANDON.—This church sadly needs restoration on archæological lines. At present its chancel is covered inside and out with a thick coating of cement, whereby the character of its ancient features is entirely obscured. These appear to be of thirteenth century date, and include some short lancets, rather broad in proportion to their height, and a low side window in the south wall.

¹ *An Attempt to ascertain the Age of the Church of Mickleham, in Surrey*, by P. F. Robinson, architect, 1824.

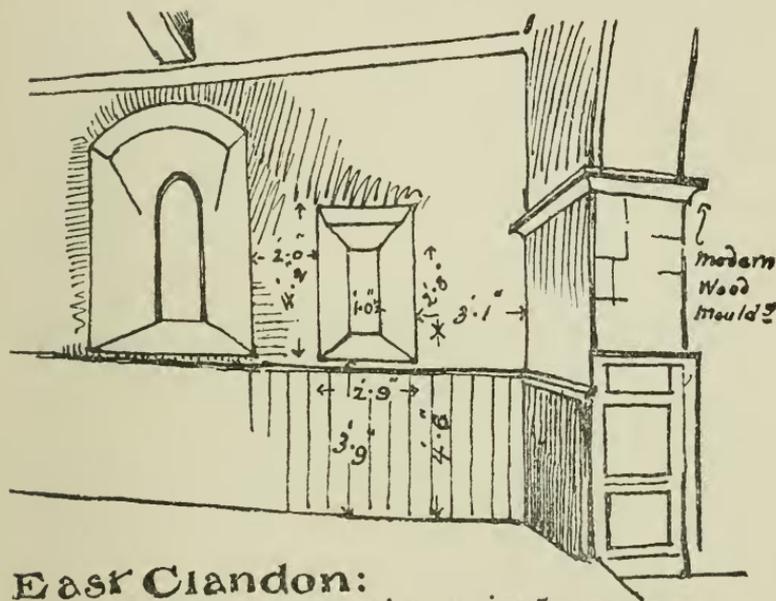
² Page 6 in the present Volume.

³ See also Burstow Church, *post*.



Little Bookham Church, Surrey. — Low side window, etc.

The dimensions and character of this latter are sufficiently shown in the accompanying sketch. The original stonework, where still visible, is firestone: the cement probably hides a rebate for the shutter. Probably the present sloping internal cill is modern, and the opening itself may have been lower down originally.



East Clandon:

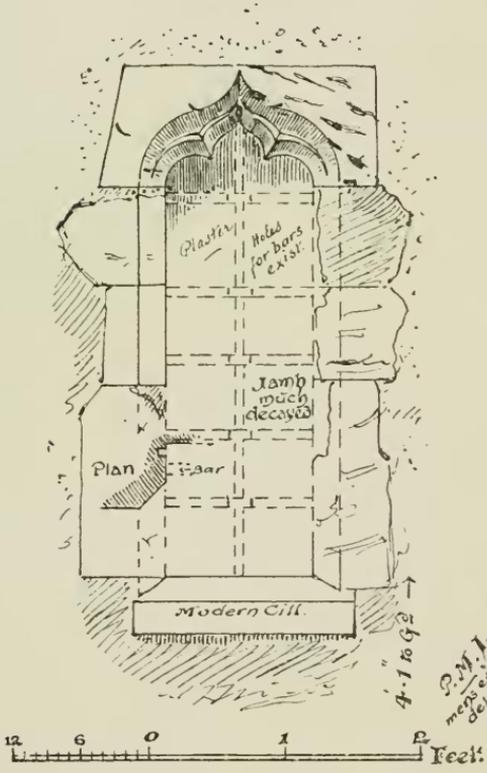
Low side window etc.

The outside opening is at present square-edged, but that may be only because of the cement covering the original chamfer which probably finished it. This window appears in "Cracklow."

LITTLE BOOKHAM.—This little church contains many features of interest, notably the late Norman arcade blocked up in the south wall. The low side window is immediately to the east of this and within the ritual choir (there is no chancel arch). If the south aisle into which the blocked arches were intended to open were ever built—which is perhaps open to doubt—its eastern

wall must have closely abutted on the jamb of the low side window, unless it had been destroyed before the latter was inserted in *c.* 1350. The plastering which covers the wall, however, hides any mark of this return wall, if such existed. There are one or two small Norman windows, a graceful late Early English triplet, trefoil-headed under an enclosing arch, in the east wall, and some plain square-headed Perpendicular windows.

Little Bookham. *LOW SIDE WINDOW.*



The low side window is the only feature of Decorated date, and follows a type common in Sussex and elsewhere. Only the external opening is now visible, the interior being plastered over and the space covered by a modern monument. The chalk rag in which it is formed has perished, the head alone being in good condition: this and the jambs retain the holes in which were fixed the iron stanchion and cross-bars that originally fenced the opening; behind these is a groove, showing that at some time it has been glazed. Probably a rebate for the shutter

exists on the inner side, now hidden by the blocking. The present height from cill to ground is rather over 4 ft.

GREAT BOOKHAM.—The late Major Heales, in the plan

accompanying his paper on this church,¹ shows a window in the north wall of the chancel, which he describes as being of the same style and date (1341) as the elegant two-light Decorated windows in its north and south walls, but “of one light only, the eill of which was cut down to form a lychnoscope.” At my first visit paid to this church fifteen years ago I made no sketch of this feature, and at a recent visit I was unable to gain admittance to the building—the only way by which to ascertain if the low side window is still in existence, a vestry having been erected against the north wall since Major Heales’s plan was drawn. If that gentleman’s supposition be correct, this would be one of those somewhat exceptional instances of a low side window in a north wall.

WALTON-ON-THE-HILL.—Mr. André opines that the peculiar plain square-headed opening on the north side of the chancel here, like that last described, “seems to have been a lychnoscope.”² I came to the same conclusion at a visit paid to the church some time ago, but I have no sketch or measurements of the opening, which now is inside the building, owing to modern extensions. There is still (or was) the original ironwork of stanchion and cross-bars in the opening. It is set low in the wall close to the chancel arch, and would seem to be of 13th century date; but its absolutely plain character makes the age an open question.

BURSTOW.—There is a large three-light Perpendicular window in the south wall of the chancel of this church, close to its western end, and under the easternmost light is shown in “Cracklow” what appears to have been a blocked low side window. I found no trace of this when I visited the church recently, but a good deal of repair seems to have been done to the church since Cracklow’s drawing was made, including a restoration

¹ *Surrey Archæological Collections*, Vol. V, p. 28.

² *S. A. C.*, Vol. IX, p. 160. *I. e.*, a low side window.

in the "seventies," and this feature may thus have been obliterated. I think it the more likely that such an opening may have existed here, from the fact that the internal jambs of the window are carried down to the floor, thus forming a recess up to the plane of the tracery. There are similar window recesses in connection with low side openings elsewhere, as noted under Mickleham. This church, besides its interesting timber tower and spire,¹ contains some early Norman and Early English windows, and niches and Easter Sepulchre of Perpendicular date.

CROWHURST.²—There is a low side window here in the south wall of the chancel, or, rather, traces of one, for it is (or was, at my visit some years ago) blocked up. I cannot at present give any particulars of it.

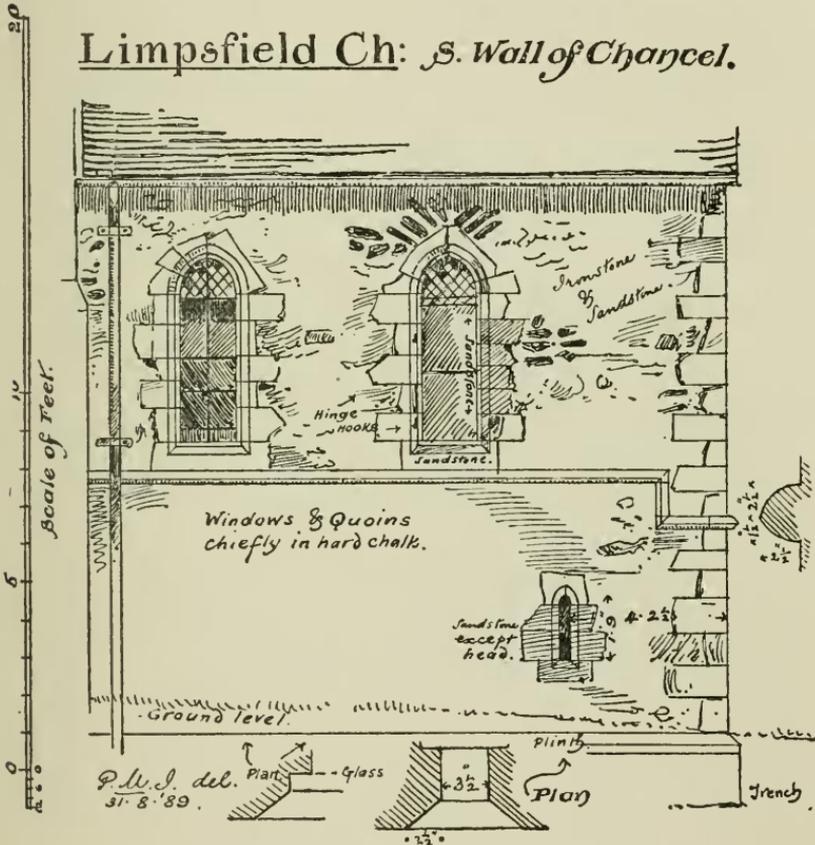
LIMPSFIELD.—There are two separate windows in this cruelly "restored" church which might come under the designation of low side window. In the first case one was discovered, a rebated double opening, under a two-light window in the south wall of the south aisle of the nave, near its eastern end—a very unusual position. The late Major Heales describes this in his second paper on the church (*S. A. C.*, Vol. VI, p. 76). The window under which this was found in 1871 was Perpendicular in date, and appears in Cracklow's drawing; the present stonework of this window is a modern copy. Of the low side window beneath it the jambs, cill and mullion are visible externally, but the interior face has again been blocked up. The outside openings are described by Major Heales as "wider than usual, and nearly square;

¹ Evidently by the same builder as the very similar constructions at Newdigate, Horley, and Crowhurst. The west door at Burstow is almost identical with that in the tower at Newdigate (*S. A. C.*, Vol. VI, p. 268). Great Bookham has another wooden tower, but the lower part is encased in stone. A series of other Surrey examples is noted by Mr. Nevill, in his paper on Alfold Church (*S. A. C.*, Vol. VI, p. 15). Rogate is a good Sussex example. Kent and Essex furnish other instances of timber towers.

² See *S. A. C.*, Vol. III, p. 29, for an interesting illustrated account of this little church, by G. R. Freach, Esq.

the hinges remained" when he wrote. At a recent visit I sketched and measured this curious example. The openings are 1 ft. 10 in. wide, by about 2 ft. 5 in. high, rebated for a shutter. Their cill is about 3 ft. from the ground, and they are not set centrally under the two-light window. Probably they are of mid-13th-century date, while the window is at least 150 years later. There

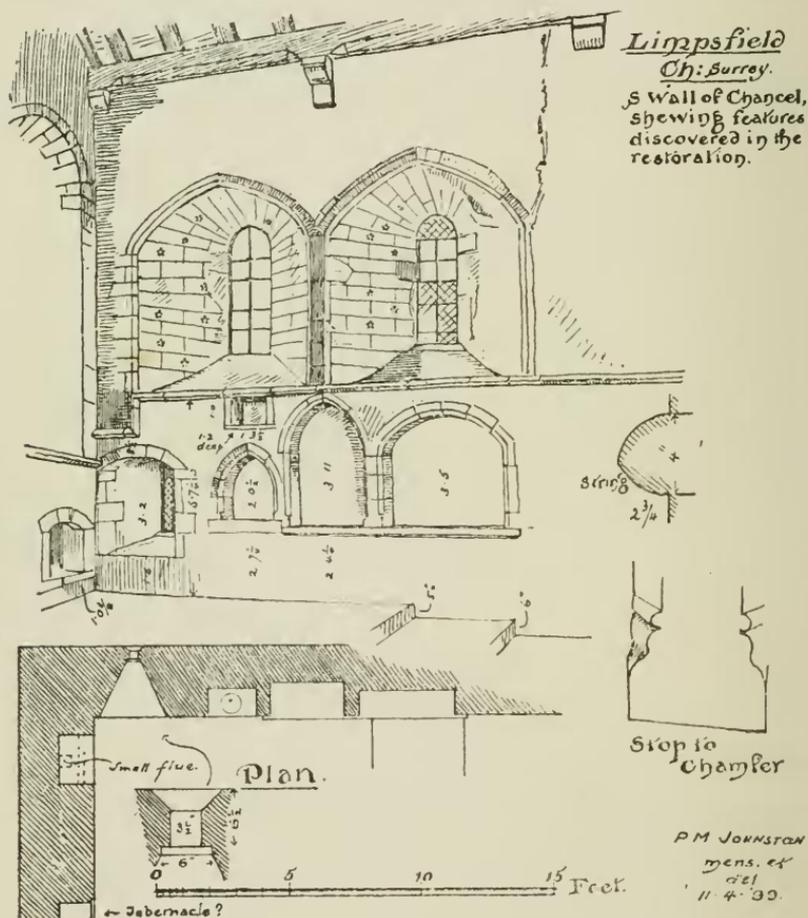
Limpsfield Ch: S. Wall of Chancel.



was originally a low wall to this aisle, the eaves of which can have been only a foot or so above the head of the low side window, judging by the water-table of the first roof which is visible inside and out. This wall was considerably raised when the Perpendicular window was inserted. It would be interesting to know whether any drawing or other record of this singularly placed double opening, as

it was first discovered, has been preserved; if so, it should be reproduced in these *Collections*, and I will gladly undertake to copy it.

The other "window," also discovered in 1871, is a very singular example. My drawings show this tiny slit (only $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide) as it appears from the outside



and inside, where it is rebated for a shutter. In Major Heales's first account of the church (*S. A. C.*, Vol. IV, p. 243) is a sketch of the interior of the wall before the discovery of this window, which comes between the east wall and the piscina. It is its position that makes this example chiefly remarkable,—close up to the east wall,

and so near the floor and ground. Internally, its head is segmental, the jambs splayed to a width of 2 ft. 7 in., and the cill is about 18 inches from the present floor level. This cill slopes upwards to the outer opening. The drawing will show how close the outer cill is to the ground. The late Mr. G. Leveson Gower expressed to me, some years ago, his opinion that the object of this curious opening was to enable a shrine or relic to be seen from the churchyard: and as there are three peculiar recesses, one at least of which *may* have been used as a reliquary, it has seemed to me a possible explanation of an otherwise very puzzling feature.¹ Two of these recesses are in the east wall of the chancel; one behind the altar, the other close to the south wall: they are of almost the same size, both having segmental heads. That behind the altar is rebated for a door. They are of the same date as the peculiar little window. The third recess may have served some distinct purpose: it is in the same wall as this window, above the piscina, and is simply a square hole, the head of which is formed by the string-course.² The whole of this peculiar group of features is of one date—*c.* 1230—and the painted stone-jointing and rosettes in the window splays are coeval.

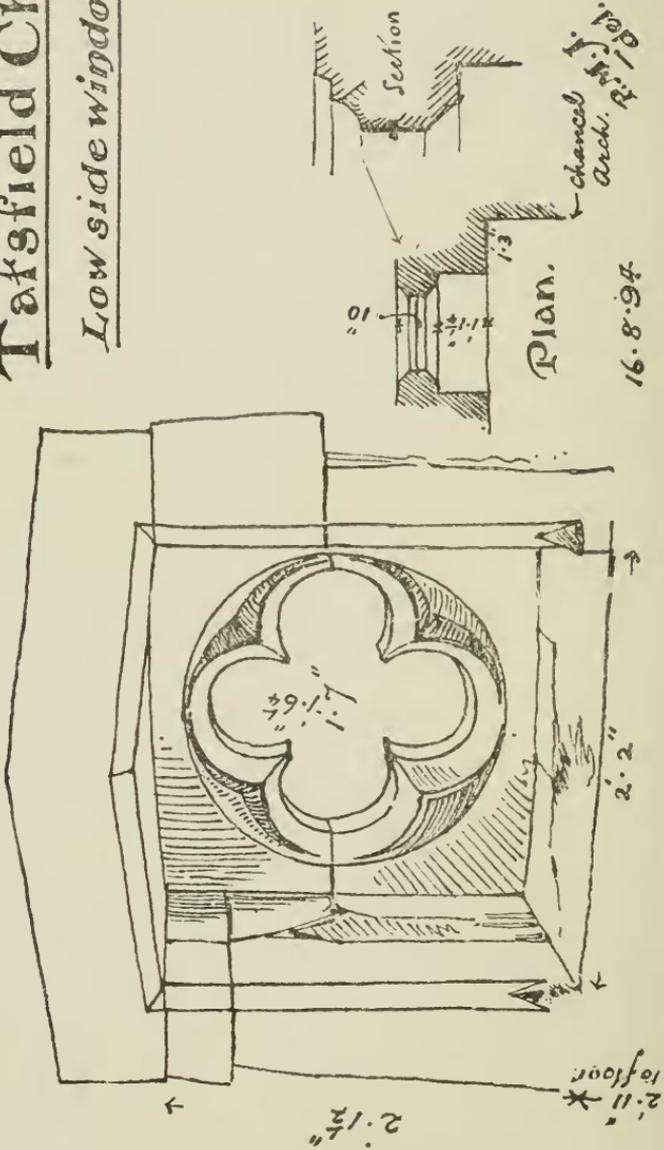
¹ See the late Major Heales's second description, *S. A. C.*, Vol. VI, p. 72. My friend Mr. Boyson, who has carefully studied this opening and the church, has come to the same conclusion as to the purpose for which the former was made. He does not, however, think that the recess nearest the low window in the east wall can have been a shrine or reliquary. Of this he writes to me: "It is an extraordinary opening, with apparently a chimney running up the wall, and I have heard the hypothesis put forward that it was used for preparing the Sacramental wafers." My own inspection quite confirms this view. What is supposed by some to have been an oven for the baking of the Eucharist wafers is to be seen in the south transept of Fordington Church, Dorset. In this case also there are traces of a flue running up in the thickness of the wall.

² Recesses in the east wall of a chancel are not uncommon. There are no less than *four* in this position in Sompting Church, Sussex, besides one in the north wall (which may have been an aumbry or Easter Sepulchre), and a piscina in the south wall. The two in the centre behind the altar probably served to contain the pix with the Blessed Sacrament and the chrism. But those right and left may well have served for the display of relics. East wall recesses occur also at Clymping and West Grinstead, Sussex.

TATSFIELD.—The little window shown in the accom-

Tatsfield Ch:

Low side window.



panying drawing is in the usual position, the south-west

corner of the chancel. For a low side window its quatrefoil form is somewhat uncommon. I have noticed in my last contribution upon this subject to the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*¹ two instances of plain circles—a somewhat similar type of opening—at Broadwater and Coombs in that county. The church itself, though much injured by restoration, contains two or three noteworthy features. One is a very early Norman window in sandstone, 6 in. wide, and set high in the north wall of the nave: another a very elaborately moulded and shafted Early English lancet in the chancel north wall. Its details are well worth study and illustration, being uncommonly elegant for a small village church. A third is a double aumbry or tabernacle in the south wall of the chancel, close to its eastern end. Hard by is a peculiar niche in the east wall, divided in two by a thick stone shelf, the upper half being probably for use as a credence. Its head is a plain chamfered ogee arch, very boldly curved. In the lower half, about 1 ft. 6 in. from the floor, is a peculiar square basin with a very wide drain, which appears to go in a horizontal direction through the wall. Both the position of this niche and its nearness to the floor, as well as the character of the drain, so unlike the similar drain found in piscinæ, are paralleled by an example of the same date which exists in the east wall of Smarden Church, Kent. Here the low side window closely adjoins, being within the sacrarium, and there is also hard by a piscina of the usual type. The writer of an account of Smarden Church in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XIV, p. 23, connects these two features. After suggesting that low side windows were “used to administer the Sacrament to lepers and others afflicted with infectious disorders,” he suggests that this water drain “was probably the *Persusorium*, connected with the ablutions necessary for the priest after ministering to leprous or infected persons.” A strong iron hook (? for a *towel*) still remains in the back of the arch over this drain. I give this quotation “without prejudice,” as the lawyers say, because of the

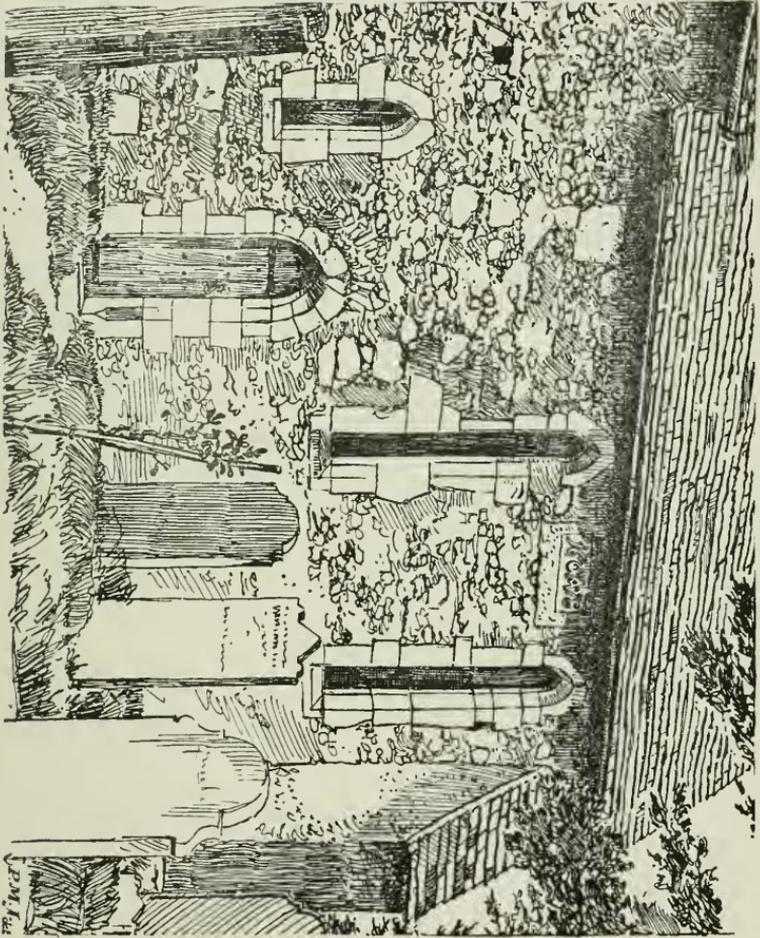
¹ Vol. XLII.

close similarity of these peculiar drains, and their accompanying a low side window in each case. The Tatsfield window is shown in the plate of this church in Manning and Bray's *History of Surrey*, but it does not appear in Cracklow's view. It is of yellow sandstone (the quatrefoil), and of Godstone or firestone internally. Though now glazed, I think it probable that the opening, which is set in a sort of square panel externally, shown in the above-mentioned plate, was closed by a shutter hinged on the outside. There is a quatrefoil opening in the north wall of the chancel of Shere Church, Surrey, which I shall presently describe.

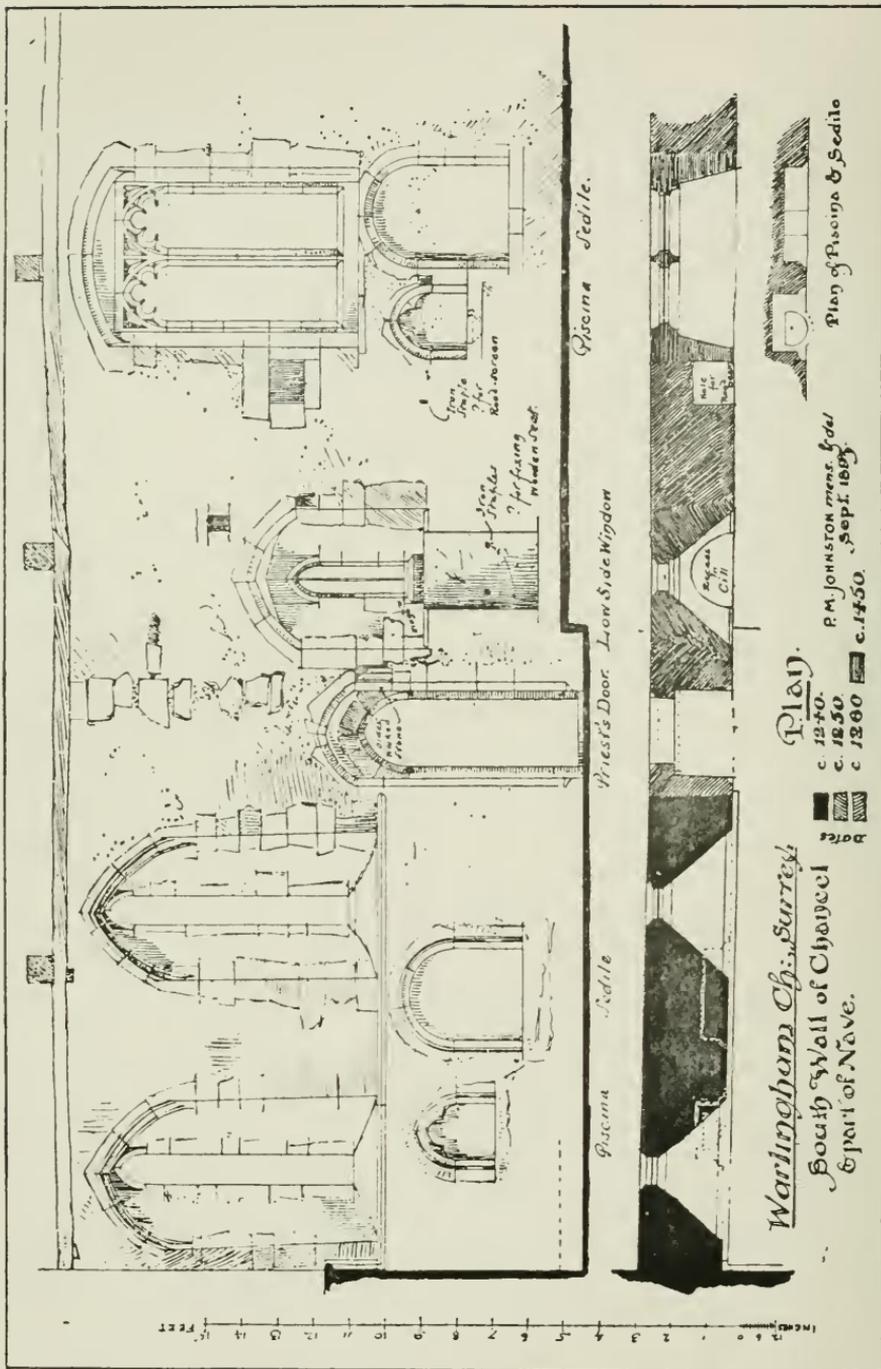
WARLINGHAM.¹ The task of restoring and enlarging this church was placed in my hands six years ago, and as many features of interest not known to exist when Mr. Ralph Nevill read a paper to this Society in the building were thus brought to light, it may be worth while to devote a few lines to the church generally, as well as to the low side window. The drawings of the outside and inside here reproduced—the latter from my paper in Vol. XLI of the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, by kind permission of that Society—will show the character of the old work. The old plan—a simple parallelogram, 57 ft. by 19 ft., with no structural division between nave and chancel—has necessarily been disturbed by the addition of a south aisle and an extension of the nave; but there is little to regret in this, as the west wall, the only one entirely demolished, was comparatively modern, with no ancient features.

The south door (which has some interesting hood-mould terminations—rosettes in a circle) has been rebuilt stone for stone in the new wall of the aisle, and the old lancet originally in the western part of the south wall has also been re-erected, with an inscription recording its removal, in the extended north wall of the nave. The eastern part of the south wall of the nave

¹ A summary of Mr. Ralph Nevill's paper, read at the visit of this Society to Warlingham Church, is given in Vol. VII of these *Collections* (p. xviii).



Warlingham Church, Surrey, South side of Chancel, as restored.



Warrington Church, Surrey
 South Wall of Chancel
 & part of Nave.

Plan
 c. 1270
 c. 1280
 c. 1280

P.M. JOHNSTON mens. & del.
 Sept. 1887

Plan of Piscina & Sedile

was not touched. In it, under the Perpendicular window shown in the internal elevation, we found a piscina and sedile, while under the corresponding two-light window in the north wall of the nave another piscina was uncovered, but no sedile. These, which served chantry altars at the rood screen, were of 13th century date (*c.* 1250), as no doubt was the screen, of which no trace except the holes for the beam remained. In the chancel are a third piscina and a sedile, very similar to those in the nave.

Certain discoveries made during the works at the church led one to form the conclusion that the church, though of the same style and character throughout, was not built all at once, the chancel, which I assign to about 1240, being first erected, and the nave very shortly afterwards. The "battering" quoin shown in my drawings is one of the proofs of this prior erection of the chancel: a corresponding quoin, largely composed of worked stones from some earlier building, was also discovered on removing the rough cast from the north wall of the chancel. This rough cast seems to have been applied to the walls in 1678, when a restoration of the building in accordance with the taste of those days took place. The initials O. A., standing for Olive Atwood, together with the date, are to be seen on a quaint panel of stucco, which was carefully left on the south wall of the chancel when the rough cast was removed. Fortunately this 17th century restoration did little injury to the characteristic features of the building: indeed, the repairs then executed have been the means of preserving it to us, as the church had probably fallen into a state of dilapidation during the Commonwealth period.

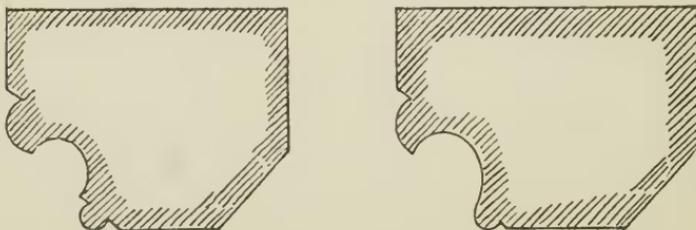
The object of the battering quoins referred to was to afford a good bond with the nave when it should be built. This was done very soon after the erection of the chancel—say in 1250—and the chancel was made slightly longer westward at the same time. The base of the north wall of the chancel may, however, belong to a 12th century building. There is a distinct line visible

outside (on a level with the internal string-course) in the flint walling, as though the older wall may have been retained up to this point. Of course the line referred to may only indicate either the former existence of an external string-course, or else that the building of the wall stopped at this point for some time. But the ancient worked stones noticeable in the walls, re-used as mere building material, while they may have been sent down by road from the Priory of Bermondsey—to whom this church was given by William de Watterville in 1158—may equally probably have formed part of the earlier building. There is nothing of a distinctively Norman character about these stones. One, shown in the quoin of the internal elevation, is a stopped base stone to a chamfered doorway. Another thus re-used was discovered in taking out the decayed stonework of one of the lancets on the same side: the back of one of the jamb stones was found to have a shallow horse-shoe trefoiled panel sunk therein, the date of which might perhaps be about 1180.

The lancets in the chancel are at first sight similar to those in the nave, but a closer inspection shows that they are rebated, instead of grooved, for the glazing, that the dimensions are different, and that the mouldings of the rear-arches internally are of different sections. These latter are so good that it is worth while to give them for comparison here.

Warlingham Ch:

Sections of Rear Arches to Lancets.



Chancel.

Nave.

0 3 6 9 12 Inches.

P.M.J.

The "early" look of these sections is noticeable to the student of mouldings; but that it does not indicate a correspondingly early date is at once evident when we note that the "scroll" moulding—which did not appear till about 1240—is used as the string in the chancel, and that it appears with an added bead in the hood mouldings of the nave south doorway and east window—in the latter case being superimposed on an arch of the section here figured as belonging to the nave lancets.

This east window was no doubt in the first instance filled with a triplet of lancets, or plate tracery. The present tracery is of Decorated date, a century or so later than the internal arch, and, although none of it is ancient, is an exact copy of that which was removed some years ago under the direction of Mr. John Oldrid Scott, who kindly lent me his drawings of the original while I was restoring the church. Mr. Scott had the new tracery worked in the same stone as the old—that from Godstone or Reigate. In renewing such parts of the old stonework as were too far decayed to be retained I have also used local stone, saturated with a specially prepared silicate to harden the face.¹ There are some small pieces of glass of Decorated date in the east window, while the two-light Perpendicular window on the north side of the nave contains some exceptionally good and perfect canopy work, chiefly in the white and yellow glass used in that period, with backgrounds of blue and tawny red. The details and colouring of this strikingly resemble a window of the same late Perpendicular date in Mells Church, Somerset.

One peculiar feature of the chancel deserves mention, viz., that it is a step lower than the nave. Before the recent restoration the reverse was the case, but I could not ignore the evidence as to the original levels found during the progress of the works; and the lowering of the chancel floor had the warm approval of the late

¹ The enduring qualities of most building stones are greatly improved by the use of silicates; especially is this the case with chalk and calcareous sandstones.

Archbishop Benson, who acted as an informal assessor on many points that had to be decided in carrying out the work.¹ He greatly admired the lancets of the chancel—"so graceful, and so gracefully set apart," as he described them in a letter.

The octagonal font, of Perpendicular date (*c.* 1450), has been "pickled," to remove the thick coating of paint that disfigured it. Neither in this case nor elsewhere has any tool been lifted upon the old stone surfaces, which now stand out in remarkable freshness, having been freed from whitewash and plaster.

The chancel roof, which is of good squared timbers, is ancient, and partly, at any rate, coeval with the walls. It remains plastered over for the present. That of the nave was a mere collection of pea-sticks, and, with the exception of the tie-beams, which are of 13th century date, had to be entirely renewed. Traces were found showing that the original covering was reed thatch, which perhaps accounts for the flimsy nature of the timbers. Much of the old timber was chestnut.

A very picturesque bell turret with boarded spire at the west end of the nave had to be removed, the timbers of which it was constructed and the supports inside the building being completely rotten in most cases. They had been cased and otherwise ill-treated in a past generation, but one of the massive beams still remains to mark its position. The character of a stop to the chamfer on this warrants the supposition that the turret which it supported was, in origin, if not in actual fact, of 13th century date.

It may be well here to mention that a sort of curtain arch of timber and plaster, which was the only mark of separation between nave and chancel, disappeared long before the recent works were carried out. In 1881 I sketched some remains of ancient painting on its western face, consisting of angels' faces and a conven-

¹ His Grace wrote—"I am glad you preserve the step down into the chancel. It was quite characteristic of older churches. A dreadful mess of all proportions has been introduced by the fancy for making altars high—stultifying window and sedilia and piscina without remorse in many places."

tional vine pattern. As the same pattern was found on the north wall bordering the Perpendicular window this "arch" may have been of the same date (*c.* 1450).

"St. Christopher" in distemper on the north wall, also probably of the 15th century, had greatly faded since its uncovering in 1875, and its condition was not improved by the nave roof being off, and the tarpaulin with which it was protected having been blown down in a storm. I have recently, however, carefully varnished the painting, with most satisfactory results.¹

I now come to the feature with which this paper is primarily concerned—the low side window on the south side of the chancel. Like the lancet windows eastward in this wall, it had been at some time cased externally in cement. When this was removed only the jambs were found *in situ*, but there was good warrant for the shape and height of the head, which was accordingly restored to the form shown in my drawings, and part of the jamb and cill, which are rebated internally for a shutter, were sound enough to retain, a hinge-hook for the latter being left as found in the east jamb. An oak shutter and iron stanchion were put in the opening—not, I hope, an archæological *faux pas*!

But the chief interest of this "window" lies in its cill niche inside—a circular recess shown on the plan and elevation of the wall. I discovered and opened this myself quite accidentally, and have since found an exactly similar feature in a Sussex church.² There was a step up into this recess from the chancel floor.

¹ It is greatly to be desired that committees should be formed in connection with our County Archæological Societies for obtaining a survey of what remains of ancient mural or other decoration in our churches. Paintings are uncovered in the course of "restorations," and (if suffered to remain) are thereafter utterly neglected. After being covered up for centuries, they are exposed to light and damp, and nothing done to preserve their tender surfaces. Surely it would be doing a good work if responsible bodies were to undertake the simple task of sizing or varnishing these precious, but fast perishing, records of the past.

² Botolph's, near Bramber, described and illustrated in *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. XLI, p. 175.

Obviously the purpose of the niche was to allow the person using the shuttered opening to gain readier access thereto, and to stand or sit therein, and it will be seen that the opening is out of the centre of the cill, so as to allow of such a person placing a book or other object upon the cill against the eastern jamb.¹

The late Archbishop Benson and Mr. Leveson Gower were not agreed as to the object for which this low side window was made, the former holding to the leper theory, while the latter supported the view that I maintained—that it served chiefly, if not solely, the purpose of an outward confessional. My reasons for holding this view as to the primary use of low side windows generally will be detailed later. I would only here remark that the fact of these openings having been constructed for any one use does not preclude their having been turned to account for any other. The opening is 9in. wide, and its cill 5ft. above the original ground level.

ADDINGTON.—I have included a drawing of this among my illustrations (*see* frontispiece), not only for the sake of the low side window, but because yet another restoration has taken place since the drawing was made, and the tiny Saxon or Early Norman window here shown blocked, has, I understand, been opened—whether or not to the detriment of its antiquity I do not know. One does not often see a Norman and Saxon window side by side in the same piece of wall, and the addition of the very “low” side window in the Decorated period makes the whole an extremely interesting study for antiquaries.²

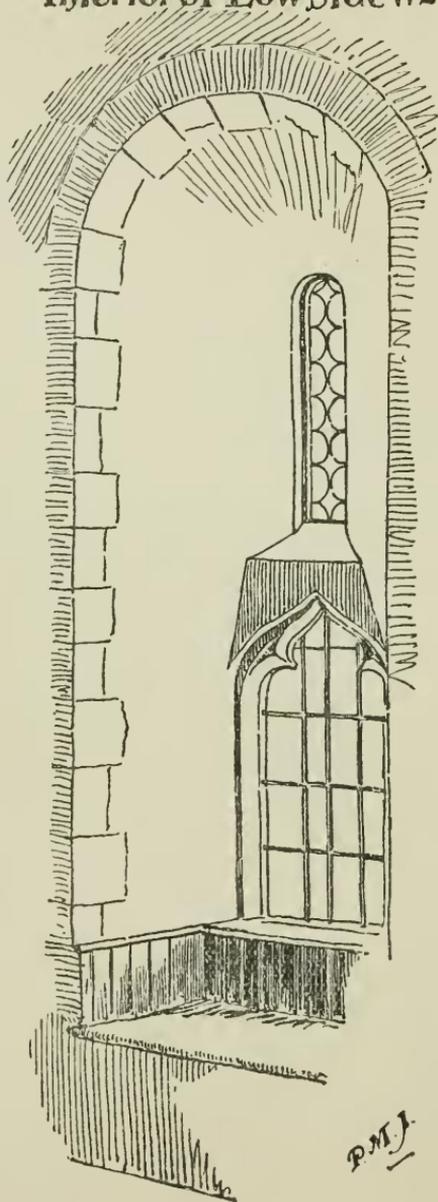
¹ Doddington Church, Kent, Elsfield, Oxford, and Melton Constable, Norfolk, have low side windows, which, among other interesting adjuncts, retain stone book-rests in their eastern sides. The first of these also has an ambrise on its western, and a niche for a crucifix above the desk, on its eastern jamb—favouring the idea that a priest sitting at the window to hear confessions would be occupied in the intervals with reading and devotions.

² The peculiar horse-shoe outline of the head of the Norman window, struck from a different centre to that of the opening itself, will be noticed in the drawing. The same peculiarity is found in some late Norman windows in the north wall of the chancel of Hellingly Church, Sussex.

The latter feature, though independent externally, is incorporated with the Norman window inside by the prolongation of its splayed jambs down to within about 17 inches of the floor, at which height is a seat occupying the window recess, shown in the sketch of the interior. The wall, as will be seen from the plan, is of unequal thickness, and the rebate for the shutter would appear to have been on the outside face. Only the inner half of the ogee-trefoiled opening is ancient: the outer half is a modern restoration in Bath stone. The iron bars are ancient: they do not appear externally, being behind the glass with which the opening is now filled. This window is shown in Cracklow's view.

The seat in this example would render it peculiarly well adapted for hearing confessions, while there does not seem to be any sufficient reason for its occurrence in regard to the other theories that have been advanced.

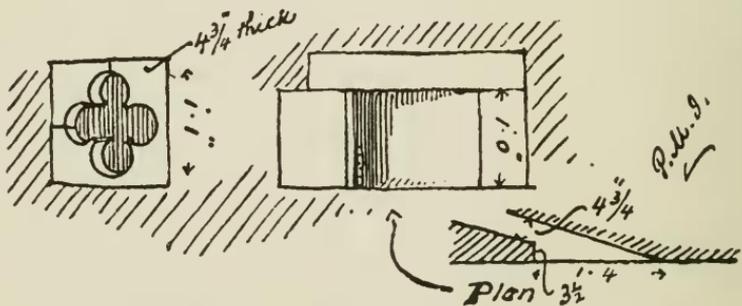
Addington Ch. ^{Surrey.} Interior of Low side W^w



Seats in connection with low side windows were sometimes much more elaborate features than in this case. Wigginton Church, Oxfordshire, and Walgrave, Northants, furnish examples of stone seats under projecting canopies, cusped and carved to an extent which would seem to show that they were for the use of a person of much more importance than the acolyte or sacristan, either of whom it has been supposed by the holders of certain theories used these openings.

Here for the present I must conclude my attempt to describe the low side windows of Surrey Churches; but before passing on to a consideration of some of the theories that have been advanced to account for the origin of these peculiar openings, I would draw attention to two very remarkable apertures in the north wall of the chancel of Shere Church, one of which has been described by some as a low side or "leper's" window.

*Shere Ch:— Blocked openings
in N. wall of Chancel.*



My own feeling as to both these was that they had originally communicated with an anchorite's cell, attached to the north side of the chancel and against the east wall of the shallow transept that projects on that side. But my plan and sketches having been made fourteen years ago, I thought it better before writing upon the matter to communicate with the Rector of

Shere, the Rev. F. C. Hill. That gentleman has courteously replied to my enquiry as follows:—"The squint, or hagnoscope, and quatrefoil did undoubtedly communicate with a cell outside the north wall of the chancel, as there is the mark of a pent roof which evidently covered such a cell. I take it that a person kneeling under shelter of such a roof would look through at the altar and receive the Sacred Elements through the quatrefoil opening, passed through with a kind of spoon or ladle with a long handle, such as I believe used to be employed for such a purpose."

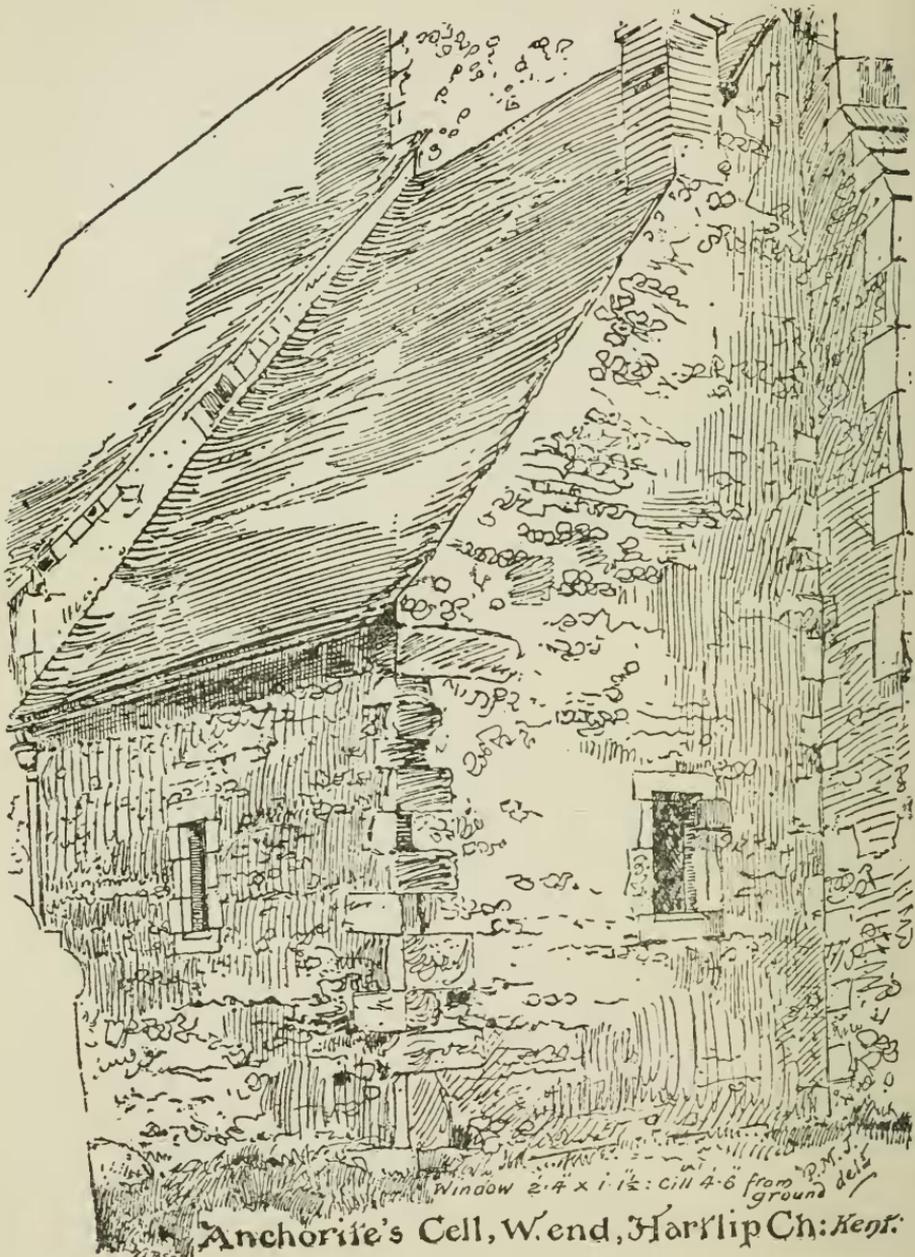
If there had been only a squint or quatrefoil, one would have thought it quite as likely as not that the lean-to building which formerly existed was a sacristy; but the conjunction of the two—the squint, pierced obliquely and looking towards the altar, and the quatrefoil, cut at right angles to the wall, both uniting on the outside within the area of the space indicated by the roof marks—all this evidence tells much more in favour of the openings having served an anchorite's cell.

These cells, attached to the walls of churches, or in the churchyards, sometimes chambers over the porches or in the towers of churches—occasionally even in the roofs of nave, chancel or aisle—were used, it must be borne in mind, by at least three classes of persons:—(1) by anchorites or recluses, male or female; (2) by a resident priest; or (3) by itinerant clergy—monks or friars—the former especially, it being a frequent practice of the large monasteries who acquired property in parochial churches to farm the living, and, instead of appointing a resident vicar, to send over one or sometimes two of the monks from the parent monastery to perform Divine Service, collect the tithes, etc.

While, therefore, it is clear that these dwellings in or attached to churches were used for divers purposes, it is equally certain from documentary evidence that a very large proportion of them were anchorites' cells, and it is highly probable that the building once existing at Shere, on the north of the chancel, was one of these.

I know of no perfect example of an anchorite's cell

in Surrey; indeed, I cannot call to mind even traces of such having once existed, except in this case of Shere



Church. But in Kent and Sussex there are numerous instances on record, and some actually remaining. A very perfect example, that of Hartlip Church, Kent, is here illustrated, for the reason that there is, as I conceive, a distinct analogy between the uses served by the external window—grated, shuttered, and low down in the wall—of the anchorites' cell and the low side windows proper of churches.

But to proceed with our main subject: let us, in the light of such evidence as we have gathered, review some of the theories of origin which have been propounded to account for the low side window.

Two facts stand out plainly, and are generally admitted by those who have studied this question at all closely:—(A) That some suddenly discovered want caused these openings to be constructed at a certain date in great numbers throughout England: if one may venture to name a date in this connection I should say *circa* 1250: And (B) That no one theory of the many that have been advanced accounts for each and every example. If we keep these two facts in mind we shall clear the ground for the consideration of the theories of origin.

Starting with the first of these facts, and using the second as a saving clause, I have been led to the conclusion that the primary originating cause of low side windows was the need for some form of outward Confessional, *i.e.*, of a place where friars or monks in the first instance might hear the confessions of all comers at certain times of the year, as distinguished from the regular and normal mode or modes in which the parish priest was accustomed to do so. The date of the appearance of these openings and that of their ceasing to be constructed exactly coincide with the establishment of the friars in this country and with the decline of their influence. Very few low side windows can be found of a date within sixty years of the Reformation, or after, say, 1470, although church building was still actively going on.

Before proceeding with the consideration of this theory, however, it may be well to examine some of the others that have been advanced.

- (1) We have the idea, widely held and of some antiquity, that low side windows were made for the use of lepers and others suffering from infectious diseases, or for cagots and excommunicates to assist at Mass and to receive the Holy Communion. Such evidence as I have adduced in treating of the Guildford example certainly lends weight to this view, as accounting for particular low side windows. It has, too, the partial support of such an eminent authority as the late Dr. J. Mason Neale, who writing upon some example found in the churches of Denmark says,¹—"I confess these facts confirm me in the opinion I have always entertained that—granting lychscopes to have been sometimes employed for the administration of the Holy Eucharist to lepers or to cagots—their real use and design was for the reception of the communion of all comers." Murray's guide to the Pyrenees states that in some of the mountain churches special entrances, holy water stoups, and *low windows*, for the use of the Cagots remain in use. It would be interesting to know whether these poor outcasts are still confessed through the "low windows." The late Archbishop Benson gave the first place to this theory. Its strongest point, as I think, is the analogy between low side windows and such openings as that above described in Shere Church. If we know *for a fact* that the Sacred Elements were administered through an opening in one of the walls of a church to a recluse in his cell, why may not the Host have

¹ *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol. XIII, p. 218.

been conveyed in some cases to those numerous classes of unfortunates, such as the lepers, through some of the openings we class as low side windows? The existence of a certain number of leper hospitals, with their own chapels, does not do away with the probability that in many cases the parish churches were resorted to by such wandering outcasts.

In the oft-quoted *Bavaria Sancta* of Raderus,¹ the anchorite's cell adjoining a church is required to be constructed of stone, 12ft. square, with three windows, *one towards the choir, through which the Host might be received,*² another opposite to it, in the external wall, for the admission of food, etc.—this was always grated and shuttered (see illustration of Hartlip Church *ante*),—and a third, high up, closed with glass or horn, for the purpose of giving light.

- (2) We have the lychnoscope theory in its two forms: (*a*) That the Paschal light might be watched through such an opening as a low side window low down in the wall. If this were the use, why have shutters? is one's comment at first hand. It is, however, slaying the slain to discuss a theory that has long since been withdrawn as untenable by its original inventors—the Cambridge Camden Society. (*b*) Several well-known archæologists maintain that these openings were used to place a light in to scare away

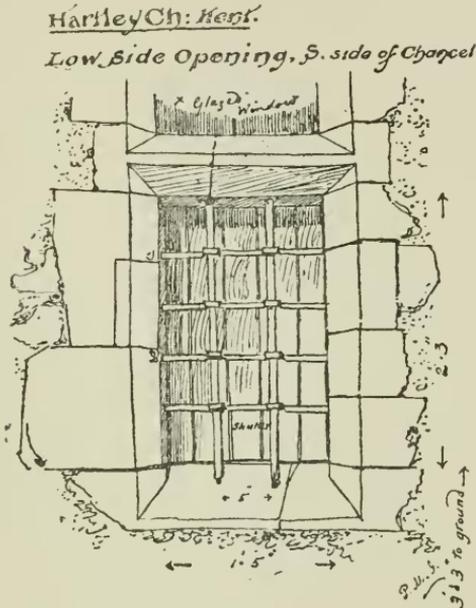
¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1860, p. 334.

² I have illustrated another of these Sacramental openings, as I believe it to be, in Vol. XLII of the *Sussex Archæological Collections*,—that at Kingston-by-Sea Church. The Rev. E. S. Dewick, M.A., has kindly sent me a copy of his paper in *The Archæological Journal*, Vol. XLV, p. 284, on a similar opening in the north wall of Chipping Ongar Church, Essex.

demons from the graves. And they couple with low side windows in this view a class of openings as high in the wall, relatively to the ordinary fenestration, as the low side windows are low. As to this theory, we are reminded that there are the still surviving Continental practices of placing lights on pillars and in lanterns: and these customs are no doubt of an antiquity far greater than the earliest Christian period. But are low side windows a fair analogy? Surely, on the face of it, this hypothesis is far-fetched. What a very little of the area of a churchyard a "low side" or "high side" window with a light in it would command; and often the part of the graveyard principally in use is on the south side and the window on the north, where there is only a narrow strip, as at Doddington Church, Kent. Our mediæval ancestors were nothing if not practical, and they would surely have grasped the fact that the demons would only have to go round to the other side of the church to escape the light. Secondly, if this theory were the true explanation, one would expect to find low side windows a common feature in Norman and pre-Conquest churches, whereas the very reverse is the fact. They do not appear as a feature in our ancient churches (with one or two rare and doubtful exceptions) till about the middle of the thirteenth century, and then they appear by hundreds.

- (3) There is the sanctus-bell theory. For practical reasons this too stands condemned. If we consider it as the originating cause of low side windows as a class, we are faced with the fact that, in addition to their being

frequently only a few inches wide, they were in many cases barred with an iron grille, the openings in which were, as in the example here figured from Hartley Church, Kent,



only four or five inches square. Surely, if the object of the opening were the passage of a hand and bell through, it would not have been made so absurdly difficult! I admit that the few examples of low side windows to be found in upper story chapels, as at Prior Crawden's Chapel, Ely Cathedral, Winchester College Chapel, and that of Leeds Castle, Kent, seem to favour this view; but, on the other hand, the great majority of normally situated examples do not; and in many cases a low side window is actually in existence side by side with a sanctus-bell cot or central tower of the same or earlier date, and much more suitable for ringing a sanctus-bell to be heard in the

village. These exceptionally situated examples, it should be noted, are generally of comparatively late date.

The other theories that have been advanced may possess some likelihood, viewed as secondary uses, but considered as primary causes of the making of low side windows generally they are none of them of sufficient weight. Briefly, they are as follow:—

(4) Ventilation. That these openings, whether intentionally or not, served this purpose is undeniable! but that they were constructed *ad hoc* as a class I cannot think. It is difficult to believe that a craving for ventilation can have sprung up suddenly in the middle of the 13th century, and died out a century or so before the Reformation—the date at about which low side windows went out of fashion. But no doubt, when some other cause had brought them into existence, the idea of ventilation came to be associated with these openings.

(5) Another secondary use that appears to me to be much more probable, is the exposition of relics to pilgrimages, and the kindred idea of watching a reliquary or shrine, as in the example before described at Limpsfield. There is great probability that two openings possessing the characteristics of the typical low side window (except that they are rather high up from the ground), to be seen in the east wall of the chancel of Faversham Church, Kent, belong to a group of such openings. The openings in question have flat-pointed segmental heads, and are chamfered all round. They are 2ft. 7½in. high × 1ft. 6½in. wide, and their cills are not quite 6ft. from the ground. A closely meshed iron grille fills both openings,

allowing only $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. between the iron bars. No theory seems to account for these exceptionally placed openings except the one here advanced, which gains probability from the fact that Faversham Church was rich in relics, and was so handy to the great pilgrim route to Becket's shrine. A low shuttered opening in the west wall of the north aisle of the nave in Dartford Church, Kent, may also very likely have been used for the display of relics.

- (6) Mr. William White, F.S.A., has originated a theory that low side windows served some purpose connected with the mortuary offices. If this were the true explanation of these openings one would expect to find them in every village church; but the reverse is the case: allowing for the destruction at the Reformation and subsequently of a certain proportion, not one in three of the churches of England can ever have had a low side window. Mr. White's theory is a plausible one, but documentary evidence and actual facts do not support him. The "window" in Doddington Church, Kent, as before noted, is on the north side of the chancel, with only a narrow strip of churchyard on that side, while on the south, where all the burials have taken place, there is no low side window. I could name many parallel cases to this.
- (7) To give light to the reader of the lessons.—Why have a *shuttered and unglazed* opening to give light? And why further block it with a grille?
- (8) To symbolise the wound in our Saviour's side.—Such an idea will not stand the test of criticism in the light of actual examples or common-sense.

- (9) For offertory purposes.—This, too, is quite impossible as a practical explanation.
- (10) For the ringing of a bell to give warning of the approach of the priest.—There is not a particle of evidence, documentary or otherwise, to support this notion.
- (11) For the acolyte to pass the censer through, to fan the charcoal.—Again those grilles!
- (12) For the distribution of alms in money or bread.—Why have a barred window, with the priest's door quite handy for such a purpose?

And so we come to the only theory that will account for the rank and file of these openings.

(13) THE CONFSSIONAL THEORY.

How were confessions heard in the middle ages?

The probability is that there was, in early times, no fixed place and method, but that a variety of "uses," originating in local customs and circumstances, prevailed; and one of the earliest—perhaps the most general—would seem to have been the screening off of the chancel, or some part of it, in which the priest sat, with a *velum* or curtain to separate him from the penitent.

The late Archbishop Benson, writing to me some years ago, assumed this to have been the most common mode. It is to this already long-established practice that the Council of Durham, held in 1217, referred when it laid down that "the confessions of women were to be heard *without the veil*, and openly, as far as outward appearance was concerned, but still not so as to be heard by the public, but seen."¹ Anyone who has noticed the narrowness of many of our reputed-Saxon and Early Norman chancel arches will see how easily adapted they are for curtaining off the chancel.

¹ Bloxam, *Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture*, Vol. II, p. 124, 11th edition.

Other and later methods (but in use concurrently with the *velum*) of hearing confessions are to be found in apertures pierced through walls and screens. As an instance of the latter there is a beautiful parclose screen, dating from about 1330, between the chancel and south chapel at Newington Church, Kent, in the close-boarded lower part of which are two perforations, one in the shape of a cross, about 5 in. square; and on the chancel side is the mark of where a bench was fixed against the screen. The cross would be at the level of the ear of a person sitting on the bench.¹

Much might be written of the many classes of openings to be found in the walls of our ancient churches, and of some of which the original purpose, or purposes, can now only be guessed at. The commonest and most familiar of these classes is the hagioscope, or squint, often found side by side, and, as I have instanced above, sometimes in actual combination with the low side window. Is it not, perhaps, too hastily assumed that these singular piercings through walls and piers, because they *usually* command a view of a high or side altar, were therefore made for that purpose alone? It is, I think, quite possible in many instances that these so-called hagioscopes were used as confessionals. That they should be so pierced as to make the altar visible does not militate against such a possibility, but rather adds weight to it; while, as can easily be demonstrated, the peculiar resonance of these miniature tunnels makes a whisper at one end distinctly audible at the other. Another form which these perforations through internal walls assumes is illustrated by the undermentioned very interesting instance to which Mr. André draws my attention: "At Sandridge, Herts, there is a solid wall, pierced with windows, between the nave and chancel, and with a central doorway, by the sides of which are stone stall ends: on one is carved a listening priest, on the other a

¹ Many of these borings through the close boarding of screens were no doubt simply and solely for the convenience of some of the favoured pew-holders of those days. But such an explanation hardly fits this instance at Newington.

woman, beads in hand, which is curious enough in itself, but, I think, also shows that confessions were heard near the chancel arch, just in the locality where low side windows occur."¹ There is, in fact, a low side window here, as well as the pierced internal wall.

Again, there are those singular perforations in the backs of sedilia, sometimes communicating with a chancel aisle, but sometimes also with the open air. Such a perforation, in the form of a miniature late Decorated window, existed in the back of the western of two stone sedilia in old St. Giles's Church, Camberwell, in this county, destroyed by fire in 1841.

It is not till we come to the close of the 15th century that we find any evidence of the Shriving pew and stool, the immediate precursor of the more modern Confessional Box. Notices of it appear in early inventories and churchwardens' accounts, and remains of such erections still exist, as in West Wittering Church, Sussex.

Such were, as I conceive, some of the methods of making private confession to the *parish priest* in use before the Reformation. But there was another prominent ecclesiastical personage who came upon the scene in the 13th century in the person of the Franciscan friar.

In the popular conception of to-day, monks and friars of all orders are often classed together, as though for all practical purposes they were the same thing. In reality each was the antithesis of the other, and inspired by radically different aims and methods. Seclusion from the world and their fellow men, contemplative devotion, and a peaceful agricultural life was the ideal pursued by the monks, who sought, by the example of a holy life and by means of prayer and intercession, to elevate mankind.

The friars, on the other hand, believed in the virtue of personal contact for the rebuking of sin, disease and misery, and setting the pattern of the higher life. Eschewing the cloistered life, with its odour of unfruitful sanctity, they deemed it to be their peculiar mission to

¹ See *Archæological Journal*, Vol. XLII, p. 247.

seek out the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, in the streets and lanes of the crowded cities, in the highways and hedges of remote country districts, and to "compel them to come in."

They selected the towns, rather than rural neighbourhoods, for their head-quarters, and there built themselves houses and conventual churches, spreading abroad from these centres, living from day to day on the alms of the charitable, and throwing in their lot with the poorest of the people. Their work lay wheresoever their fellow men were to be found; in attending markets and fairs, in speaking the homely tongue, using the rough jest and cheery laugh, and living the simple life of the common people; feeding the hungry, tending the sick, and administering consolation to the dying. They would preach wherever they could get hearers, from the village cross or the corners of the town streets, and, welcome or unwelcome, within the walls of the parish churches.

We have abundant historical evidence that at their coming to England in A.D. 1221-24, and for long after, until the salt of their lives had lost its savour, the friars were received with open arms as saviours of society by the laity of every class: they had all-powerful backers in some of the Popes, as well as among the Archbishops and Bishops, many of whom, and also the confessors of the King himself, were chosen from their ranks. The monastic orders might be jealous, the secular clergy might not always relish this invasion of their prerogatives, but still it is clear that such opposition availed little to check the tide of combined forces in Church and State that swept the friars into a position of commanding influence.

Thus they must early have encroached on the special function of the parish priest in hearing the confessions of his people. Like a latter-day imitator of their methods, they would say, with disdain of limits to the exercise of their ministry, "The world is my parish." In A.D. 1265 the Friars Minor (Franciscans) were empowered by Pope Clement IV to preach, hear confessions, and to give absolutions and enjoin penance, without the assent of the

secular clergy.¹ Doubtless this only *regularised* what had already, by forty years of popularity and influence in high quarters, become well established. And when we find the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, in 1278 and 1300 respectively, enforcing the general Papal authority with mandates to the clergy of their provinces, admitting the friars to hear confession, is it any wonder that they should have come in time to exercise this function, as well as to preach at the invitation of the incumbent, in the parish church or wayside chapel? Nay, as in the case of our British ancestors, who invited the Saxons into England to do the work which they were, through long sloth or incapacity, unable to perform themselves, may not the secular clergy, willingly or unwillingly, have opened their churches to the new confessors, and thus have given them a foothold, which force of custom soon established, and from which it would be vain, after a time, to attempt to dislodge them?

It seems to me, then, that the low side window was the result of this willing or unwilling concordat; that it is the visible token, stamped on the face of many a church throughout the length and breadth of the land to this day, of the power wielded by the friars; that it embodies the compromise which both parties would find it politic to arrive at, whereby the claims of the friars, while admitted, would be strictly limited and localised.

And where the friars led the way the monks soon followed. I have suggested one way in which they came into contact with the people as confessors, viz., in cases where the parent monastery served the affiliated parish church direct. Thus we find that in Wetherall Church, Cumberland, a late example, a low side window was inserted, bearing the inscription in old English letters:

“Orate pro anima Will. Thornton, abbis.”²

That this should have been cut in the outside stonework

¹ *Waddingi Annales, Minorum Tome II, Regestum Pontificium*, p. 101. Quoted by Bloxam.

² *The Archæological Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 321. The latinity of this inscription in Mr. Parker's quotation is hardly correct.

would seem to show that external approach was connected with the use for which the window was made.

I take it, then, that the average low side window was used for hearing confessions, and in particular marked the distinction between the methods of the regular clergy, *i.e.*, friars and monks, and the secular or parish priests. There are two facts which add weight to this supposition, one the well-known letter of Bedyll, and the other the analogous low side windows of anchorites' cells.

The monastery of Sion, at Isleworth, Middlesex, was that of which Bedyll, as a commissioner at the visitation made on the suppression of religious houses and chantries, was writing to Cromwell. It was a twin foundation of Carthusian monks and Bridgetine nuns, and certain of the former heard the confessions of the latter. "Their two chapels were under the same roof," writes Mr. Blunt,¹ "being, in fact, a double chancel, each with its separate stalls, and opening into each other by a 'grate,' or 'grille,' the gate of which was unlocked only for the entrance and departure of the clergy when they said Mass at the altar of the Sisters' Chapel."

In his letter to Cromwell, dated December 17th, 1534, Bedyll is speaking of the "obstinacy" of certain of the brethren in the matter of the acknowledgment of Henry's title of Supreme Head, and he says:²—"We have sequesterd Whitford and Litell from hering of the ladys confessions, and we think it best that the place wher thes frires have been wont to hire [hear] uttward confessions of al commers at certen tymes of the yere be walled up, and that use to be fordoen for ever, ffor that hering of utward confessions hath been the cause of muche evyl, and of muche treson whiche hath been sowed abrode in this mater of the Kinges title, and also in the Kinges graces mater of his succession and mariage."

The points to note in this document are—firstly, that the two monks Whitford and Litell are called "frires,"

¹ Introduction to *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, a book written specially for the ladies of the convent. Edited by the Rev. J. H. Blunt.

² *Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries*. Edited by T. Wright, Esq., for the Camden Society.

showing how identified with the very notion of confession the friars had become; and, secondly, that the "walling up" of the place where they had "been wont to hear outward confessions of all comers at certain times of the year"—*i.e.*, in Lent and before the Great Feasts—*cannot* refer to the place where the confessions of the sisters were heard, but to some aperture in an external wall, answering entirely to all the characteristics of a typical low side window, whereto anybody in the outside world might approach and make confession.

These points, taken in conjunction with the well-known fact of all low side windows until these days of restoration having been *walled up* (with very rare exceptions), evidently at an early stage in the long struggle of the Reformation—judging by the materials of the blocking, such as the bricks and plaster—seem to me to lead irresistibly to the conclusion that the low side window of parish churches in the great majority of instances was an outward confessional. Probably a wooden stool or a bench was placed outside for the penitent to kneel on: and these, to us, uncomfortable conditions would not, it must be remembered, be deemed specially severe to our hardy ancestors, unused to our ideas of warmed and comfortably seated churches.

The other fact that appears to me to settle the main use and object of the low side window is the *certainty* that confessions were sometimes made through *a* window—and that a "low side" one in all its characteristics—in the case of the external aperture of an anchorite's cell. We know that a good many of these anchorites, some of whom were "included" for life in their cells, were priests, and as such continued to hear confessions. Whether "*Robertus inclusus de Hertlepe*," who lived in the cell attached to Hartlip Church before referred to, was one of these walled-up priests I do not know; but Roger de Wendover writes of another and earlier anchorite, St. Wulfrie, who lived in the 12th century:—"In the village of Conton [Compton Martin], distant about eight miles from Bristol, he exercised the priestly office for some years. He repaired to another town,

Haselbury by name, where, burying himself in Christ in a cell adjoining the church, by much labour and much affliction of the flesh and spirit he won for himself the grace of Christ. Whose discourses were redolent of celestial harmony to those who heard them, though he always spoke to men through a barred [*clausa*] window."

Pilgrims often repaired to a holy anchorite to be shriven before setting forth on their long journey. One such is represented in an early 13th century painting on the wall of the south aisle of Upchurch Church, Kent, as standing before a turret-like structure, from the window of which protrudes a hand raised as in the act of pronouncing absolution.

It seems, indeed, to have been a common practice not only for pilgrims to be shriven by anchorite-priests, but even for kings at some great crisis of their lives to repair to the cell of a noted recluse, there to make confession and to receive absolution. Two such instances, at least, are on record; one that of Richard II, who, according to Stow, before going out to meet Wat Tyler, confessed himself to an anchorite; and the other that of Henry V, who, after his father's death, went by night "to the Recluse of Westminster, a man of perfect life, and unfolding to him the secret of his whole life, being washed in the bath of true penitence, received against the poison of his sins the antidote of absolution."

I have thus, as I think, made it plain that "irregular" modes of hearing confession, regularized by custom and force of circumstances, abounded from a very early date—indeed from before the formal setting up of auricular confession as a practice binding upon all: and that of these the low side window in our churches—whatever subsidiary purpose, or purposes, it may have come to be used for—was one.

NOTE.—In the internal elevation and plan of the South wall of Warlingham Church, facing p. 109, the hatching to show the dates is wrongly placed: that denoting 1250 should be 1260, and *vice versa*.