

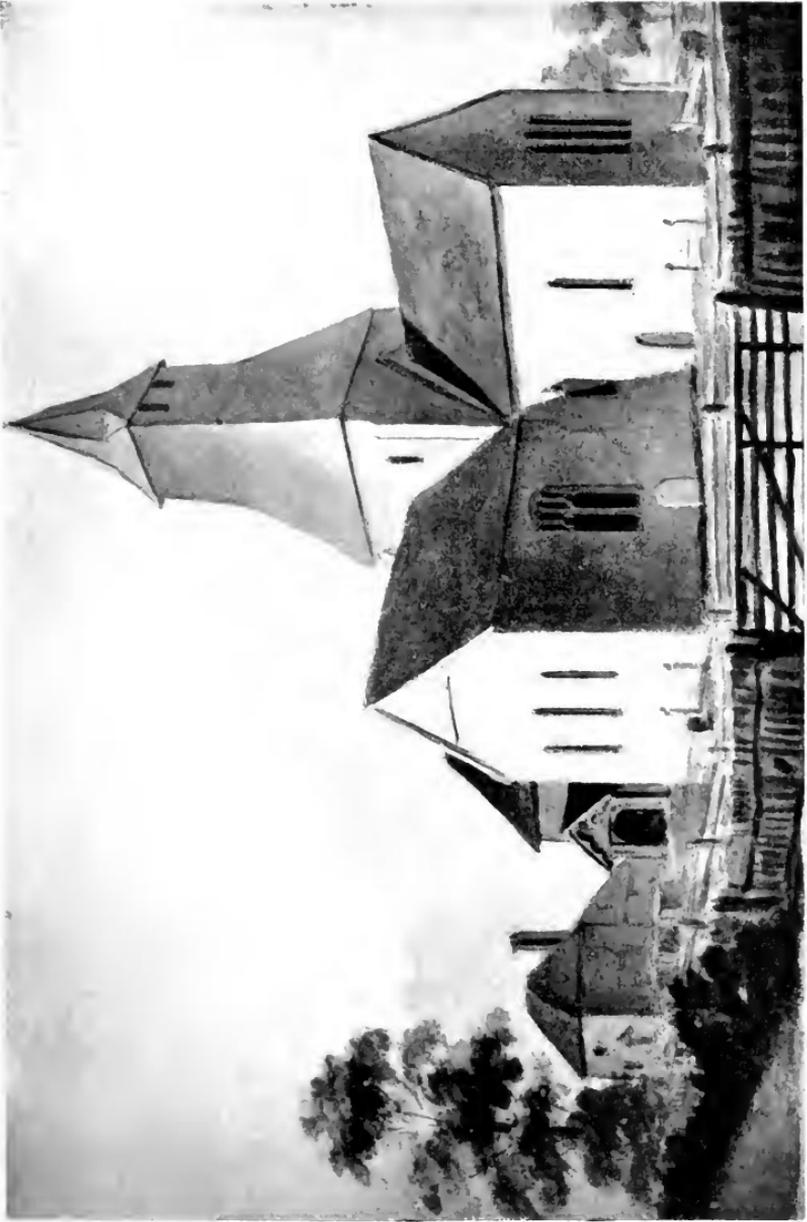
EWHURST CHURCH: RECENT DISCOVERIES.

BY

PHILIP MAINWARING JOHNSTON, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

THE Church of SS. Peter and Paul in our Surrey Ewhurst—there is a Sussex Ewhurst as well, and both derive their name from the ancient yew-trees in their *hursts*—is one of the most beautifully placed in the county; but though the views in Cracklow and the Sharpe Collection give us a charmingly picturesque building of most irregular outline, they represent a past state of things. What exactly happened in 1839, when tinkering repairs to the ancient central tower and its wooden steeple were in progress, we may never know. Till the other day the popular belief was that both tower and spire had crashed, and in their fall had “ruinated” chancel and transepts, and that the whole of the cruciform Church, excepting most of the nave, had been built anew on the old foundations. Beyond dispute, all the central tower, so far as the exterior is concerned, is the Early Norman “as she was spoke” in the first year or so of Queen Victoria, and not without a certain grotesque quaintness; with its 2-light, shafted, cushion-capitalled windows, and a broach-spire of timber boarding. The impression of antiquity is aided by the pleasantly tinted local sandstone rubble and dressings, but of course the details will not bear looking into by the student of antiquities.

In like manner the chancel and both transepts—more especially the N. transept—had evidently been so extensively injured by the disaster of 1836 as to necessitate almost complete rebuilding in imitation Early English, with the embellishment of an East window of pseudo-Perpendicular design, the form of which, with modifications, was repeated as the West window of the nave.



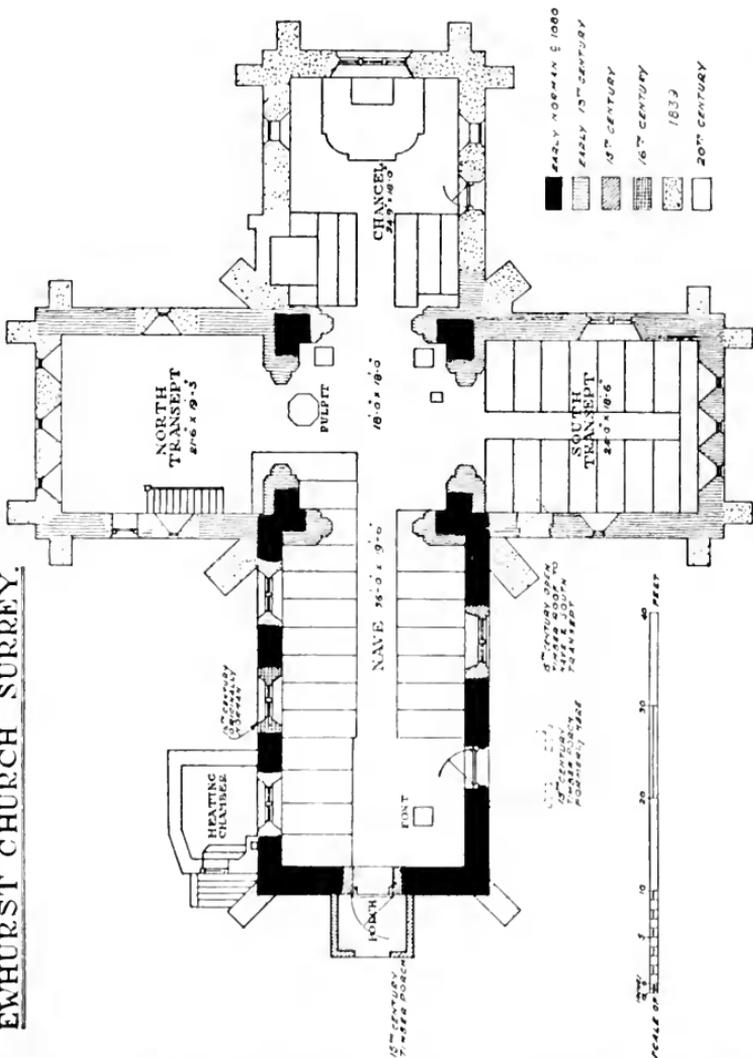
Ewhurst Church from South-east in 1868.
From the water-colour drawing by Henry Petrie, F.S.A., in the Sharpe Collection.

The writer of the description of this Church in the *Victoria History of Surrey* (Vol. III) took a distinctly pessimistic view of the amount of ancient work remaining after the catastrophe of 1839 and the reconstruction that followed. I had always believed that if opportunity offered, that is to say if the external imitation stone-stucco and the heavy interior plaster that the restorers of that fateful period had covered up everything with could be removed, the bulk of the fabric would prove to be medieval; and that in like manner the removal of the plaster ceilings would disclose ancient oak roofs in the nave and one or both transepts, but not in the chancel which plainly proclaimed itself early nineteenth century. This expectation and belief have been most happily justified in the investigations carried out as part of a scheme of general repair, under the guidance of Mr. Arthur J. Stedman, F.R.I.B.A., and of myself acting in consultation with him.

In brief, we have now an Early Norman Nave, 36 feet by 19 feet 6 inches, dating from about 1080, of which the chancel, later transformed into the central tower of the extended plan, was about 18 feet square internally. This was cased with an additional foot of masonry on its outer sides, and four arches cut through to the newly erected transepts and the chancel projected to eastward, thus developing the simple early nave and chancel plan into a complete cruciform plan. The entire development was in the Early English period, in about 1210.

This extension gave a N. transept, 21 feet 6 inches, by 19 feet 3 inches, a S. transept, 24 feet, by 18 feet 6 inches, and a chancel, 24 feet 9 inches, by 18 feet. This chancel (Plate XIX) had three simple lancets in the E. wall and probably two each in the N. and S. walls, with a priest's doorway in the S. wall and the usual aumbry and piscina, with perhaps a stone sacrament-house such as I have just found in the Norman chancel of Ripley Church. It was, in fact, a fully developed and furnished chancel for a parish church of the smaller type. But of the features enumerated none now remains, the fall of the upper storey of the tower and the spire having destroyed the chancel. We can, however, form an idea of what the Early English Chancel looked like from Petrie's drawing, in the Sharpe Collection, and by comparison with the work in the S. transept. The quaintly irregular wooden steeple is well shown in Crack-

EWHURST CHURCH SURREY.



PLANS MINIMIZING DISTORTION
ARTHUR J. STEEDMAN

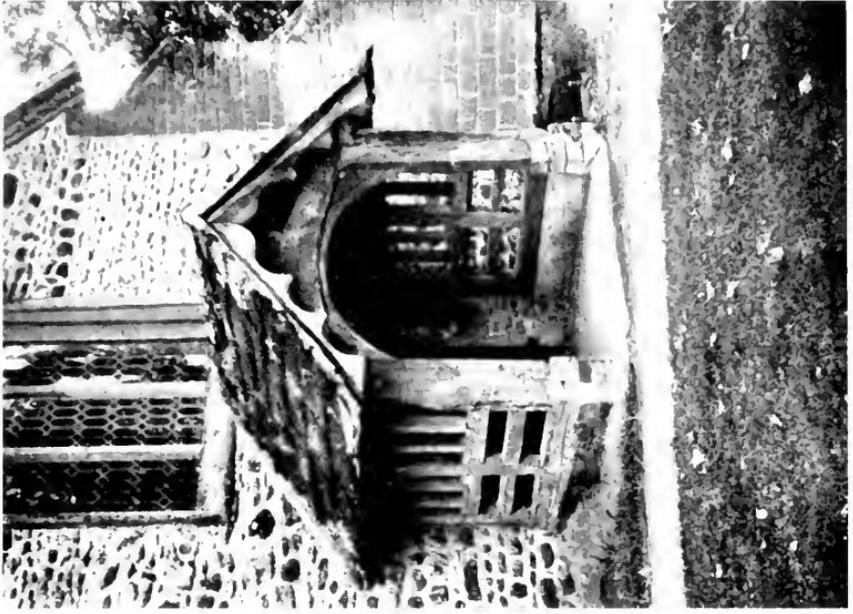


Photo. G. C. Davis. 1911.

The West Porch.

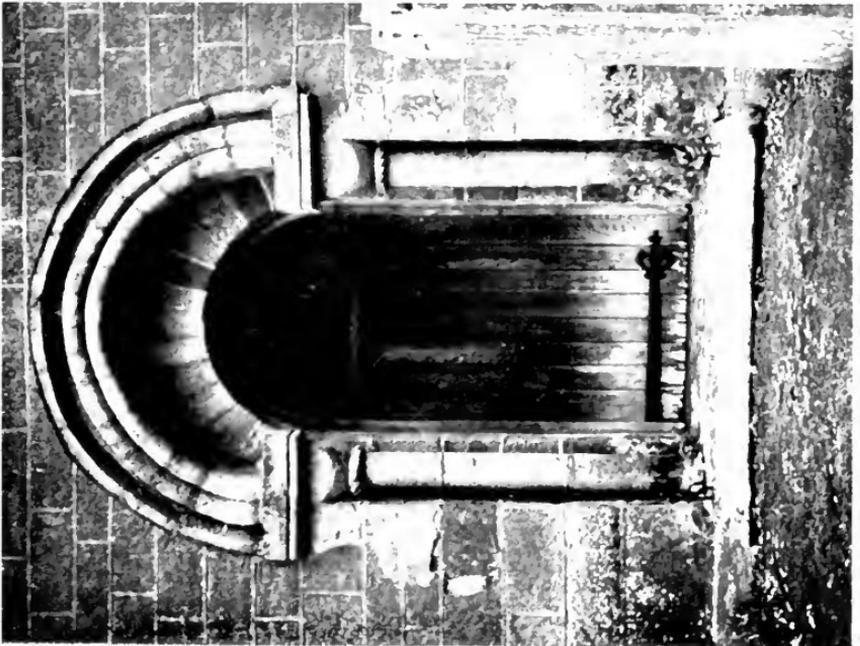


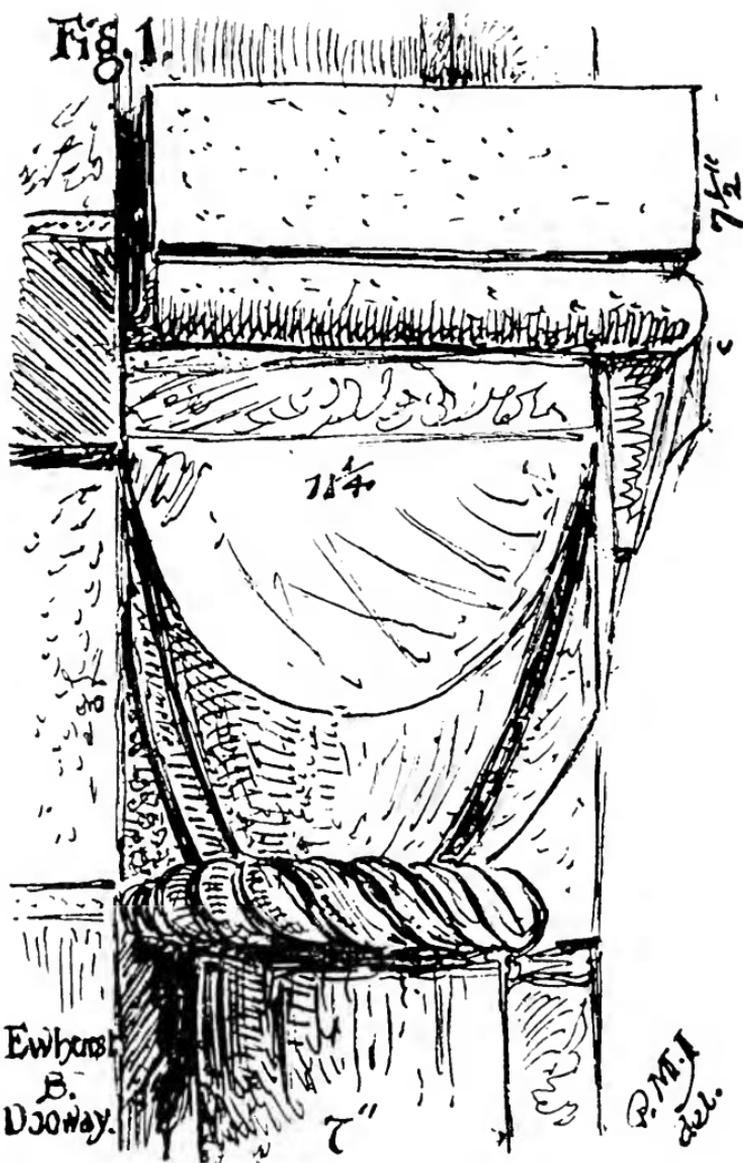
Photo. Norman Hatcher, 1911.

TAWEHSI CHURCH.

South Doorway of Nave.

low's *Churches of Surrey* and in Petrie's slightly older view, the one from the S.W. and the other from the S.E. Both views show us that there was, prior to 1839, a timber fifteenth-century porch over the S. doorway of the nave, similar in character to the charming old porch to the W. doorway, which happily still survives.

The N. transept does not appear in these old views, and as it seems to have been involved, with the chancel, in the catastrophe of 1839, it is only possible to say that the three lancets in the N. wall and the single lancets in E. and W., with the small doorway in the W. wall, correspond to pre-existing features. The walling here is not only re-plastered internally, but concealed externally by a curiously deceptive stucco, imitating rubble masonry with struck joints, so that any guess as to ancient work that may remain underneath is baulked. The same observation applies more or less to the S. transept and nave, but the W. wall of the latter was skinned externally many years ago, revealing a very picturesque rubble construction of local ironstone and sandstone. One may safely guess that if the false-jointed cement imitation of sandstone ashlar were stripped from the N. and S. walls of the nave a very interesting series of discoveries would result, such as that the middle window in the N. wall might prove to be eleventh-century Saxon or Norman, and one or more early windows would be found in the S. wall. At present there is a 2-light super-traceried fifteenth-century window in the eastern part of the S. wall of the nave, and an Early Norman doorway of *c.* 1080-1100 in the western part, now disused (Plate XX). This doorway, though not perhaps in its original state, is of exceptional interest to us in Surrey as one of the oldest of its period. It may be classed with the S. doorway of Witley (which is actually a Norman door*case* set within a larger and taller Saxon doorway), and the W. doorway of Farley Church illustrated by me in Vol. XXIII, p. 88, *S.A.C.* Here we have a heavily moulded outer order to the arch, consisting of a deep channelling and two rolls resting on a deep impost roll-moulded and large cushion capitals of unequal height, having cable-moulded neckings (Fig. 1). The bases are at present buried, and it is very desirable that they and the rest of the stonework should be exposed by lowering the path and removing the stucco that covers most



of the outer jambs. There is a charming variety in the colours of the sandstone of arch, capitals and jambs, from red-brown to golden orange—particularly in the arch of the inner order, which is square-edged and not concentric with the outer, having narrow wedge-like voussiors, giving the impression of later insertion or alteration. A great improvement would be effected

by a better type of oak door and the removal of the thoroughly bad hinges which disfigure the present. Altogether this very interesting and unusual doorway cries out for more sympathetic treatment.

The W. doorway is in clunch, with a plain 4-centred arch of late fifteenth-century date. (Plate XX, W. Porch.) The W. porch is of oak on a low foundation and from the character of its foliated bargeboard it would appear to be older in date—say 1400 or thereabout. The open oak framing of the sides with triangular headings (Fig. 3) may be coeval with the front. The roof is of Horsham stone slabs, which weigh very heavily on the oak rafters, and in the recent works nearly brought about a collapse. Happily, the careful measures lately taken have secured its stability. Although the "Perpendicular" window above it dates only from 1839, it retains terminals with human heads, and another at the apex of the arch, which are of fourteenth-century date. The 2-light windows, E. and W. of the old one in the N. wall of the nave, are modern insertions. The roof of the nave is ancient, heavily timbered in oak, and of tie-beam and king-post construction, very dark in colour, plastered between the rafters.

The bowl of the font is old—probably *c.* 1100—but the four pillars that support it are new and of deplorable design. The bowl is in a very hard greyish-white sandstone and the four sides decreasing in width downwards, each face ornamented by a roll-border enclosing a St. Andrew's cross, with rude foliage or chevrons between the arms. The cover is a composite of eighteenth-century carved oak scroll-work and modern wood.

From the nave, transepts or chancel very effective views are obtained of the massive pointed arches that support the central tower on its four sides. (Plate XXI, arches of the crossing, looking S.E.) They are of rough-hewn Ewhurst sandstone, immensely hard, and of pointed form and two continuous chamfered orders, starkly plain but most impressive. In the rubble around them are many darker coloured sandstones which give a picturesque variety: and although the removal of the heavy coating of stucco which concealed their construction has revealed some scars and minor injuries, the gain in recovering the authenticity of this lower stage of the tower

is amply justified, and the whole interior of the church has been immensely improved. One was prepared, in skinning the arches, to find patches of brickwork or other unsightly "mends," but on the contrary the old stonework has been revealed in a remarkably perfect and unscarred state.

The S. transept, barring an inserted trefoil in its gable and ugly buttresses at the angles, had been less knocked about by the 1839 emendations than the rest of the church; and the modern plaster having been removed, the thirteenth-century date of the three lancets in its S. wall became evident. They have chamfered segmental rear-arches and pointed heads to the lights. The single lancet in the W. wall is not so convincing, but probably represents an original feature. On the other hand, the 2-light fifteenth century window in the E. wall is quite genuine and marks the position of the ancient Lady Chapel altar. In searching for the piscina and aumbry, which we failed to locate, we found, beneath the cill of this window, the recess or sunk reredos of the original altar of the thirteenth century, its plastered back still decorated with zigzag colouring of that date, which has been left exposed.

Cracklow's view of 1824 shows a small pointed-arched doorway in the W. wall of the S. transept, but this seemed to have vanished entirely till we made search; and it was then recovered, in perfect condition, from behind a coating of sham rubble on the outside, and of internal blocking plastered over, and it has now been reopened for use, fitted with an oak door and suitable wrought iron hinges. The outer arch and jambs have a narrow chamfer, but the internal jambs and arch are square-edged and are carried up to a quite unusual height above the external head; and the inside arch is semicircular, which in other circumstances would prescribe a Norman date (Fig. 2). This charming little doorway is a distinct addition to the recovered antiquities of Ewhurst Church.

The roof of this S. transept is a magnificent piece of fifteenth-century carpentry, with a king-post and boldly moulded tie-beam. Its exposure has been another great gain (Plate XXII).

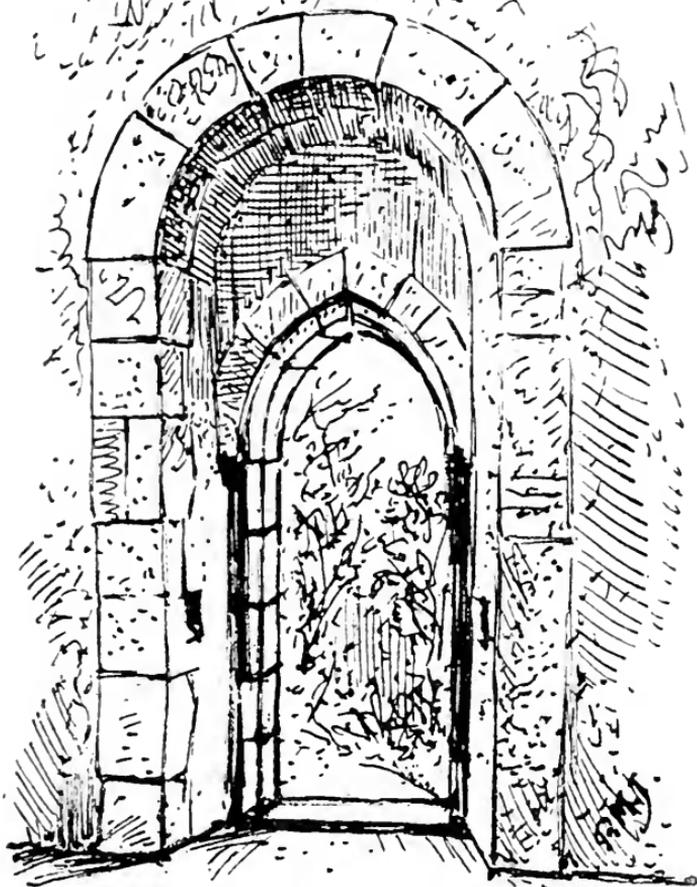
For the rest, the Jacobean pulpit with its fine cherubs' heads and other carving; the eighteenth-century altar railing of unusual plan—paralleled by the similar arrangement which I unearthed in Albury old Church—the bells—two of which are



Photo. E. J. 1900. No. 100.

Ewhurst Church. The Crossing, from North-West.

Fig 2.

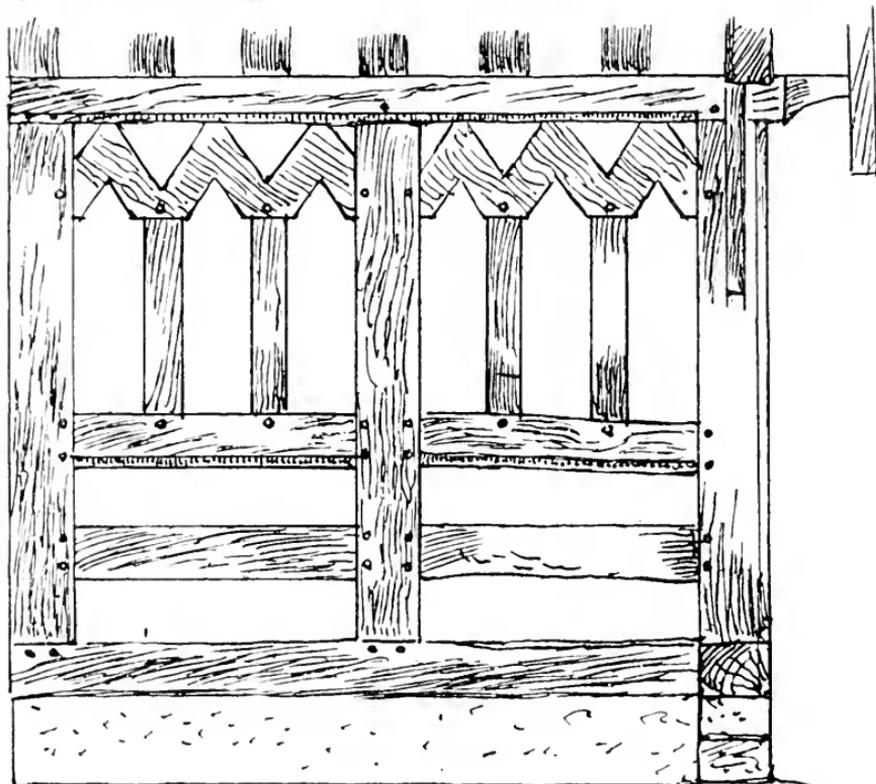
Ewhurst
Ch:Doorway to
S. Transept.

mediæval, (3) *Sancte Petre Or* (with lion's head stop and coin) and (4) *Sacte Johannis Ora Pro Nobis* (stop, coin and "R. L." shield). Nos. 1 and 2 date from 1839 (Thomas Mears): Nos. 5 and 6, 1671, by William Eldridge—and the pieces of old church plate should be mentioned.

It only remains for me to express my cordial thanks for the assistance I have received in writing this paper from the Rector, the Rev. J. B. Dollar, M.A., who has procured from another kind friend the admirably taken special photographs

Ewhurst Ch.

Fig. 3.

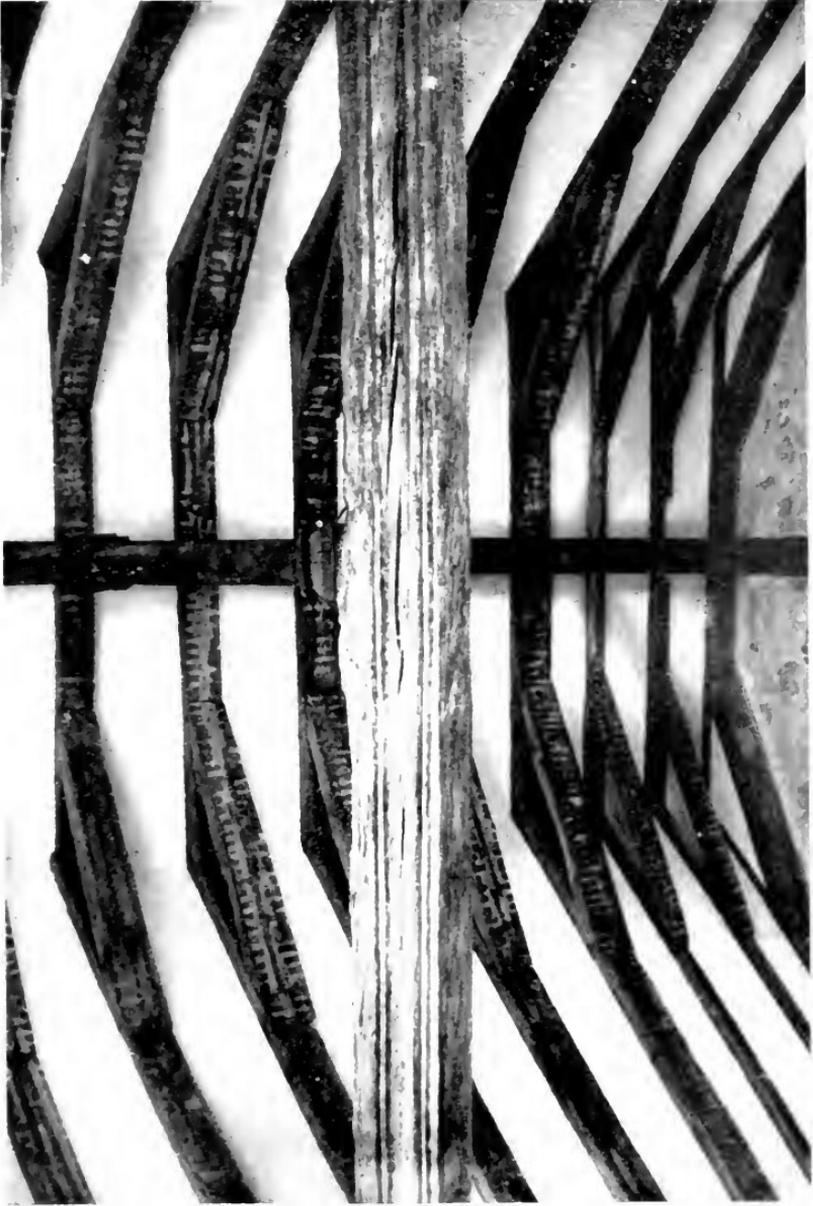
Internal Elevation of Porch.

12 6 0 1 2 3 4 5 FT

W. H. G. 1895

with which it is illustrated (by his pupils of 9 and 11 years) ; to my friend Mr. George Druce, F.S.A., for the photograph of the porch ; and to Mr. Arthur J. Stedman, F.R.I.B.A., for his kind co-operation with the plan of the Church.

I wish it had been possible to reproduce all the admirable photographs specially taken for me by Mr. F. Edward Norris and his boys, whose ages range from 4½ to 11 years. Though the credit is rightly given to these promising young photographers, one must also see the hand of the master in guiding their work.



Photo, John Gould, 1934.

Ewhurst Church. South Transept Roof, looking up Northward.