

NOTICES OF CERTAIN LYCHNOSCOPES, OR LOW SIDE  
WINDOWS, EXISTING IN CHURCHES IN THE WEST OF  
ENGLAND.

THE history and use of Lychnoscopes, or "low side windows," as they are called in the Oxford Glossary, remains so obscure, that any addition, however slight, to the information already collected on the subject may not be without interest.

It is probably unknown to many who have engaged in Ecclesiological researches, that the remote district of the Lizard Point in Cornwall contains a group of four, if not five, coæval examples of this remarkable feature in the details of architectural arrangement, which well deserve to be noticed.

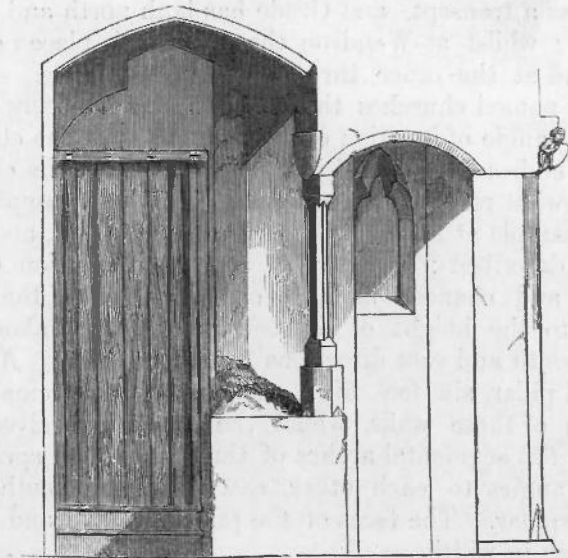
The churches in which they occur are those of Mawgan, Grade, Cury, Landewednack, and Wendron, all within a range of fifteen miles north from the Lizard Point. Each church has a transept, and Grade has both north and south transepts: whilst at Wendron the transept is placed on the north, and at the other three, on the south side. In the four first-named churches the "low window" occurs at the south-east angle of junction of the transept with the chancel, but at Wendron it is found in the north wall of the chancel and somewhat removed from the angle of the transept.

The example at Mawgan is the largest and best, and may be thus described:—the inner angle, at junction of the transept and chancel walls, is cut away from the floor upwards to the height of six feet, and laterally about five feet, in south and east directions from the angle. A stout octagonal pillar, six feet high, supports all that remains of the angle of these walls, whilst the walls themselves rest upon two flat segmental arches of three feet span, springing at right angles to each other, eastwards and southwards from the pillar. The faces of the pillar are five and a half inches each in width.

A low diagonal wall is built across the angle thus exposed, and a small lean-to roof is run up from it into the external

<sup>1</sup> See the three cuts on the following pages.

angle, inclosing a triangular space within. In this wall the "low window<sup>2</sup>," is inserted, commanding a view from the outside in a direction nearly N. N. W. and *not eastward*. Internally the window is in a very perfect state, though entirely blocked on the outside by a modern vestry. It measures two and a half feet in height, by one foot four inches in breadth, has a pointed trefoil head with flattish chamfered cusps. The sill is four and a half feet from the pavement, but was somewhat less from the soil of the churchyard. The west face of the capital of the pillar bears a rudely cut cherub, displaying on its breast a plain shield of the Edwardian form, and a smaller shield of the same character occurs on the N. E. face of the capital of a very curious little square shaft of stone which forms the eastern support of the eastern arch. Further eastward of this arch a priest's door appears to have formed a part of the arrangement. This small shaft was inserted in order that worshippers in the transept might more readily see the elevation of the Host through the opening which it makes in the wall.



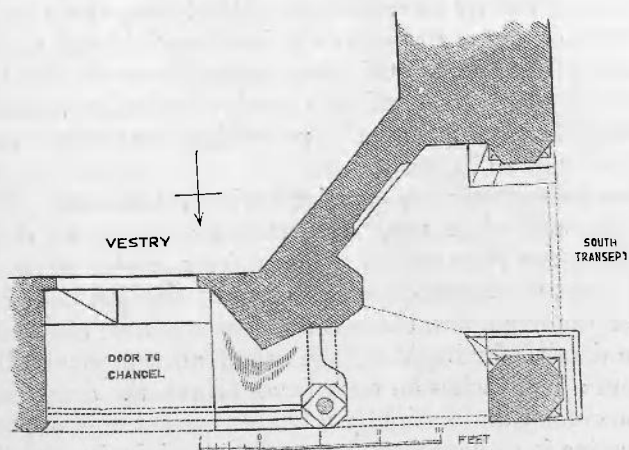
Geometrical view, from Chancel, looking Southwards.

<sup>2</sup> See opposite A in the accompanying wood-cut.

LYCHNOSCOPE IN MAWGAN CHURCH, CORNWALL.



View looking Eastward from South Transept and showing low side window at A.



Ground plan, looking Southward from Chancel.

The base of the stouter pillar is an acutely-pointed pyramid upon a flat square, vanishing in the diagonals of the octagon. A similar respond occurs in the north transept. The rood-screen and loft originally rested upon the N. side of the capital of this pillar, which is mutilated in consequence, and the pulpit now stands against its north side. This arrangement of the pulpit is general in the Lizard district. The original priest's door now forms the entrance into the modern vestry.

The position of the "low window" at Grade, Cury, and Landewednack, is the same as that of Mawgan, but the window itself is different in form; those of Grade and Cury being a small oblong opening, the former one foot nine inches by one foot four inches the sill being only one foot nine inches from the ground: the latter one foot by eleven inches, the sill being three feet four inches from the ground. At Landewednack, the window has two lights, square-headed, two feet six inches by one foot four inches, sill, four feet three and a half inches from the ground. A large block of serpentine rock is fixed in the ground beneath the window, in a position convenient for a person standing but not kneeling at the window. At Wendron, the window is more like that of Mawgan in form, though its position is different. At St. Helen's Hangleton, in Sussex, is a south low window, remarkably like that of Wendron, and provided with grooves and bolt-holes for an external shutter. The former (Hangleton) is five feet by thirteen inches, the latter, three feet nine inches by eleven. Each has a pointed trefoil head of Early-decorated character. Of the low windows of the Lizard district, the only one which is partly blocked at the foot is Grade; Mawgan is entirely so, whilst the others remain open and are still glazed.

Here two interesting questions arise, viz. the date of these windows and their use. 1st. It can scarcely be doubted that they are very nearly, if not strictly, contemporaneous; for, besides the exact similarity of their position and plan in four of the examples, there is a correspondence also in some of the details, for instance, the use of an octagonal pillar of five and a half inches on each face. Next, the arrangement is of so clumsy and unsightly a character that it is impossible to imagine it to have been part of the original plan of any of these churches.

It must have been an insertion at a date subsequent to that of the chancel and transept. Here then we have something to guide us. The East chancel windows at Mawgan and Wendron are similar, and are so like that of Higham Ferrers, *circa* A. D. 1350, given in the Oxford Glossary, that we may safely assume them to be of about that date, and they appear to be coæval with the walls.

In the other churches the architecture is of more provincial character, and therefore less worthy of reliance as a proof of date ; but at Grade there is an entire cruciform roof, a remarkably fine specimen, if not the very best in Cornwall, of a cradle roof, and dated in two places on the cornice, viz. chancel, 1486 ; nave, 1487. This has every appearance of being of prior date to the low window ; and as heraldic shields of the Edwardian form were often used as late as the XVIth century, it is probable that the windows in question were erected at the close of the XVth, and very shortly before our Reformation. So much for date ; now for their use. Upon which of the twelve conjectural uses enumerated in the fourth volume of this Journal, p. 315, do they throw most light, or what new idea do they suggest ? Wendron alone excepted, they all agree in one respect, viz. connection with chancel and transept at the point at which the rood-loft rested upon the wall of the former, the window being placed somewhat eastward of the rood, and below the level of the loft. In each example, however, the rood has been removed, and the modern pulpit has been placed on the south side against the angle at which the window occurs, as if it were wished at the Reformation to block out all remembrance of the former arrangement and destroy its use.

What that use may have been, beyond the mere supposition of its connection with the service of the rood-loft, it is difficult to determine. That it was some use common to the churches of the Lizard district, is sufficiently apparent, but I am unable to point to any episcopal or other order for the erection of such windows, or for any such use of them. I shall be glad to hear of such a discovery as may tend to settle this difficult point in Ecclesiology ; and, meanwhile, it would be interesting if any similar groups of such windows can be found in other parts of England.

JOHN J. ROGERS.