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SCALE OF FEET

Ripon Cathedral.

Probable Plan of Archbishop Roger's Church.

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RIPON MINSTER.

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WE are informed by the Venerable Bede that Alfred, King of Northumbria, founded an Abbey here for the Scots, which, on their subsequently quitting it, he gave to St. Wilfrid ; and Eddius says of Wilfrid :—" Now having built a Basilica of polished stone from its foundations to its full height, in a place called Ripon, he raised on high, supported by various columns and porticoes, and completed it."

These are two among many evidences of an Abbey Church having been erected here by St. Wilfrid ; but from certain passages in Leland, it has been more than doubted, whether the present Minster even occupies the same site with that referred to by Bede ; and the late Mr. Walbran supposed that, though the crypt known as St. Wilfrid's Needle is probably of the age attributed to it, it really belonged to some other church erected by St. Wilfrid.

It seems, however, I must confess, strange that there should have been a second church of this age at hand with a crypt, over which to erect the Minster ; and I was glad, when at the Ripon Meeting of the Institute, to find that no less an authority than Professor Stubbs was inclined to doubt the conclusion come to by Mr. Walbran, and to believe that the Minster occupies the site of the Abbey Church of St. Wilfrid.

However this may be, the fact remains that we have beneath the Minster a crypt bearing such a close resemblance to that beneath the Priory Church at Hexham (also founded by St. Wilfrid) as, when taken in connection with the structural character of both, to leave little doubt as to its origin.¹

¹ See Mr. Walbran's Memoir, "Observations on the Saxon Crypt under the

Cathedral Church of Ripon," in the York volume of the Institute.

The Benedictine Abbey was converted into a College of Secular Canons, or a new college founded, about the period of the Conquest.

Of the Saxon and the Norman predecessors of the present building, the former is now only represented by the curious and interesting crypt of St. Wilfrid, and the latter only by its south-eastern chapel, since converted into a chapter-house and vestry, with the walls of the crypt below them ; and which, though by some attributed to Archbishop Thomas, of the time of the Conqueror, I should rather suppose to have been built by Archbishop Thurstan.

With these small exceptions, the Church was rebuilt on an entirely new design by Archbishop Roger de Pont l'Évêque, who held the see of York from 1154 to 1181.

Archbishop Roger was one of the greatest men of his day. He had been in early life a companion of Becket at Canterbury, under the auspices of Archbishop Theobald, and had been by some deemed his superior in acquirements. Later, however, in life, when both had attained the Archiepiscopal dignity, Roger strongly espoused the King's side, much to the disgust of his early friend, who probably attributed the course he took to self-interested motives, as a partizan of Becket did the conduct of Roger's friend, the Bishop of London, as expressed in the well known lines :—

“ O Gilberte Foliot
Dum revolvis tot et tot,
Deus tuus Ashtoroth.”

It was Archbishop Roger who gave the last account of Becket's doings to the King ;—which led the four impious knights to determine on his murder ; a circumstance which, though the Archbishop had purged himself by oath of all evil intent, led him to be viewed as a participator in the crime. He was a great friend of Pudsey, Bishop of Durham, but not so of Ridel, Bishop of Ely, both his rivals in the patronage of the advancing architecture of their day.² Roger rebuilt magnificently the choir of his cathedral, as well as his own palace hard by. Indeed he is said to have rebuilt all his residences so magnificently as to almost rival those of

² See the amusing account of the latter joining with other Bishops in ousting him from his seat and trampling him

under foot at the Council held in St. Catherine's Chapel, Westminster.

the southern province.³ Archbishop Roger was not only a great builder, but was evidently one of the leaders in promoting that great revolution in Art which was then in progress, and which in a few years converted the heavy and massive Romanesque into the light and lofty architecture now known by the not very appropriate name of "Gothic." In this he was a fellow worker with a great neighbouring prelate, Pudsey, Bishop of Durham.

The style of Archbishop Roger's magnificent choir at York may be judged of from the still existing remains of its crypt; and of the palace which he erected, a relic probably exists in the beautiful ruined arches in the grounds on the north of the cathedral, which agree exactly in character with his works at Ripon, and are of admirable design.

The works of this transitional period are among the most interesting architectural productions of the Middle Ages. The Romanesque style, though traditionally deduced from the civilization of the ancient world, had nevertheless been in great measure moulded during the ages of barbarism; and, while uniting the vigour of the North with its classical nucleus, it was not till the twelfth century that it began vigorously to purge itself from the leaven of rudeness, and to shape itself to the rising civilization of modern Europe; and it is especially during the last quarter of that century that we see the full energy of this effort to refine the arts of the age. In Yorkshire we find this exemplified in nearly all the great ecclesiastical structures; as, for example, in the refectories at Fountains and at Rievaulx, in the naves of Selby and Old Malton, in Roche Abbey, in parts of Easby Abbey, in the remains of the exquisite vestibule of the Chapter-House of St. Mary's Abbey at York, and above all in the majestic Abbey Church of Byland. How far these works were influenced by the personal architectural tastes of Archbishop Roger, there is no means of judging, but Professor Willis has clearly proved that the same very peculiar arrangement of the eastern aisle which is still seen at Byland was adopted there in imitation of Roger's new choir at York; and it has been suggested by Mr. Walbran that he followed the same arrangement at Ripon, though, if so, it has been obliterated by subsequent alterations.

³ See Raine's "Lives of the Archbishops of York."

Mr. Walbran discovered a passage which clearly shows that Archbishop Roger entirely rebuilt Ripon Minster, and in which he says that he gave a thousand pounds to the rebuilding of the Basilica of Ripon, which he had begun "*de novo*."⁴

The church, as erected by the Archbishop, consisted of a nave of unusual width, but without aisles; transepts of more ordinary dimensions, with chapels on their eastern sides; a choir of considerable length, though narrower than the nave, and with north and south aisles, and possibly (as above suggested) with the aisle returning round its eastern end, as at Byland, and (at that time) at York.

The old Norman chapel on the south side of the choir was entirely remodelled internally, and converted into a chapter-house and vestry, by additions very admirably designed, in the transitional style; a low central tower rose from the intersection of the cross, but it seems doubtful whether any other towers were contemplated, nor is there anything to show in what manner the nave was terminated towards the west, excepting that it extended a few feet further in that direction than at present.

The architecture of Archbishop Roger's work is simple, though excellent. It retains in its doorways and windows the round arch, but the pointed form is used for the pier-arches, and in many other parts; while both are accompanied by details which, however simple, are unexceptionable in their refinement and in the careful study which has been given to the perfecting of the profiles, and which belong not to the *Romanesque*, but to the *pointed* style. There is very little carved foliage, the capitals having nearly all the plain hollowed bell form, uniting the circular shaft with the square abacus without the aid of carving or mouldings (though a few have a moulding above the bell), but when (as in the transept doorways) there is any foliated ornament, it is executed with perfect taste and skill.

The design of the internal bays of the choir and transept does not vary greatly from the usual type. There is the clustered pillar of eight shafts to the choir, and twelve (if perfected) to the transept, with simply moulded pier-arches; a good but simple triforium story consisting of a round

⁴ See Mr. Walbran's "Guide to Ripon, Fountains Abbey, &c." Tenth edition, 1873, p. 19.

arched opening, divided by a shaft into two pointed sub-arches, and with a pointed-arched recess on either side, and an arcaded clerestory consisting of a round central arch (with window) and two pointed arches and a blank arch crossing the shaft which carried the roof,⁵ a group of shafts from the capital of the pillars run up, first to unite with the clerestory arcade and then to carry the roof which was not vaulted; excepting in the aisles. The central tower was carried by round, if not segmental, arches; a strange mistake, as the pointed arch had been first introduced expressly for wide spans and to carry great weights; and it was an error, which led to subsequent failure. There is a curious projection added as an after-thought to the one original tower pier, and on its western side an indication of a screen having been originally affixed there. The great peculiarity, however, of the design was in the nave, which (as I have said before) was of very unusual width, and had no aisles. Its design can only be partially gathered from the small remains at either end of the existing nave-arcades; those to the west being cut into and shortened by the subsequently formed tower arches; but it is clear that it was of abnormal character, arcaded along the internal sides in a most curious and unusual manner, and to all appearance having no side windows except in the clerestory.

In height the nave was divided into three stages: the lower, some 16 ft. high, consisted of plain wall; the second, about 28 ft., was an arcade of wide, semicircularly-arched compartments, about 16 ft. wide, and of pointed-arched spaces of about 10 ft. wide; both deeply recessed and divided, the one into four and the other into two pointed-arched divisions like window-lights, but not pierced; the third stage had a wide, round-headed clerestory window over each of the wider compartments, with two blank wings, which, with three similar compartments over the narrower divisions, have pointed arches. The whole of each stage had a triforium passage. Lengthwise, the wide and narrow divisions would seem to have alternated, giving five wider bays and six narrower; those at the ends being still narrower than the others, owing to the deduction of the thickness of the walls at either end. That to the west was cut off when the present

⁵ Mr. Sharpe has given this bay in his "Seven Periods," but the clerestory is not shown quite accurately.

façade was added. The upper stages had shafts corbelled below, running up between the bays to carry the roof.

Externally, the buttresses (which would appear to have been very similar to those remaining to the transepts) backed each of the shafts which divide the bays. The effect must have been most remarkable. I know nothing at all like it unless it be Nun Monkton Church ; but the resemblance here is more imaginary than real, though the general principle is alike in each.

Externally, the simplicity of the design is more striking than within, yet this in no degree shakes its claims to our admiration ; indeed, it is throughout one of the most valuable specimens we have of the great transition from the Romanesque to the pointed style, though it cannot boast of any of those exquisite details which often accompany the change, and which are so beautifully exemplified in the contemporary fragments at St. Mary's Abbey.

The two transept doorways are very characteristic. They consist of three orders with well-carved capitals and good semi-circular arch-mouldings, and a fourth order within, formed in its head into a trefoiled arch. The whole is extremely well designed and effective.

The first change which was made upon Archbishop Roger's design must have taken place about half a century or a little more from his death, and is attributed to Archbishop Gray, who built the south transept at York. It consisted of the addition of the two western towers, and the rebuilding of the façade which connects them. This work is in the perfected early-pointed or early English style ; and is an excellent specimen of it. The façade may be said to be divided in its height into four stages. The lower stage contains in the centre the triple and gabled portals ; in the towers it is unperforated, but relieved by wall arcading. The second and third contains each five lancet lights in the centre and an arcade of three in the towers ; the centre one being pierced as a window. The upper stage comprised, in the centre, the great gable with a small arcade, and in the towers a similar story to those below, but somewhat higher. The towers were surmounted with leaded spires. The details are, both within and without, of the highest merit and somewhat resemble those of the eastern part of Fountains.

The next great alteration took place at the close of the

same century. Mr. Walbran informed me that he had discovered that the east end of the choir gave way about 1280, and was rebuilt between that date and 1297. It is curious that the choir of Guisborough Abbey, the similarity of which to that of Ripon has been so often remarked, has been discovered by the same antiquary to have been commenced in the very year in which the last-named work at Ripon was completed; as if the workmen moved from one to the other.⁶

The work of this period is exceedingly fine and boldly designed, and stands high among the productions of this admirable style. Its east window is a peculiarly fine one of seven lights, and all its details are excellent. If the original design had been like that at Byland, it was wholly obliterated by this alteration. The new work was vaulted with wood on stone springers, like that at York and at Selby. Internally, it is intermixed in some parts with the earlier work in a manner not easy to be unravelled. The high altar did not, as now, stand at the extreme east end, but, as at Selby, one bay in advance so as to form a continuous ambulatory; the present late decorated sedilia being then in the second bay from the east.⁷

The curious "Lady Loft" built over the Norman chapel, which had been converted into a chapter-house, must have been erected about the middle of the fourteenth century. Mr. Walbran, evidently misapprehending its style, places it a century later, but the architecture refutes this. I imagine it to have been one of the works for which funds were collected by Archbishop Thoresby.⁸

About the middle of the fifteenth century the central tower gave way and became ruinous, and its south and east sides were rebuilt, and three of the four piers on which it stood were prodigiously increased. I may mention that the central tower had a leaded spire. At the same time several of the southern bays of the choir were rebuilt, and other changes for the purpose of gaining increased strength were made both in the choir and the transept.

⁶ I may mention that at the time of this change the material of the church was also changed. The older works are of a coarse sandstone but those of subsequent date of magnesian limestone.

⁷ There are five curious hooks of iron in each of the two opposite pillars in advance

of the old altar-space as if to receive curtains.

⁸ There is curious evidence of the residence, perhaps of a recluse, in the south-eastern turret of the choir-aisle, and of a "garde-robe" formed in the parapet,

The beautiful stall-work of the choir was begun in 1489 and completed in 1494, and the rood-screen may have been erected a few years earlier.

The last change I will notice took place in the early years of the sixteenth century, when the nave of Archbishop Roger was taken down and rebuilt with side aisles, and the church assumed the general form which it retains at the present day.

Since that time the changes which have taken place in the church have been such as have resulted from neglect, dilapidation and decay, and from other more direct infringements upon its integrity and beauty. I will, however, only mention that in 1615 the central spire was partially destroyed by lightning, and in 1660 the remainder of it fell, destroying probably a part of the choir roof and of the stallwork. In 1664 the two western spires were removed, not from necessity, but for fear of their being subjected to a like catastrophe.

Among the more recent works, the first point to which I will call attention is the reparation of the western towers.

These having been added to the older work had, from the first, three sides standing upon a new foundation, and one incorporated with an older wall; a mode of building always precarious. To make matters worse, the nave wall was at a later period converted into an arcade, and an aisle wall built abutting against each of the towers. These causes, added to the unfortunate fact that the foundations were never deep enough and that they have been invaded by graves far deeper than themselves, had caused a gradual and progressive sinkage, which had produced fissures of a most severe and alarming character on every side of either tower, and from their very base to the top of their walls.

The southern tower had the advantage of floors to tie the damaged walls together, and iron ties had been introduced to diminish its insecurity; but the northern tower had been abandoned to its fate, all the floors which once stayed its walls having been taken out, and the fractured shell left open from top to bottom. Happily (the foundations excepted) the first builders had performed their duties well, or the walls could never have stood against this accumulation of damage.

The course which I have adopted has been the application

of very powerful shoring to the walls, and then having excavated in short lengths the ground against and below the foundations, the under-building of them in a most substantial manner, and in such a way as both to spread the support over a wider surface, and also to carry it down to a more trustworthy stratum, which was only reached at a depth of some 12 ft. or 14 ft. below the original foundations. I then restored the floors of the towers, and introduced at their levels and also near the top very strong systems of internal ties of iron (where such did not already exist) ; after which I took out and substantially restored all the cracked parts, introducing large and strong masses of stone across the cracks, tying them across with bars of copper, and using all other means to bring the towers into a state of perfect substantiality and soundness. By these means the towers have been rendered as strong as when first built, and made capable of sustaining the timber and leaded spires, of which they have so long been deprived.

Externally, their architectural features have been restored where they were so far gone as to demand it, but not to such an extent as to deprive them of their ancient aspect.

The remainder of the western façade required and has received extensive reparations. The mullions and tracery, which filled the numerous lancet lights of the Early English front, were an addition of a subsequent period, and injurious to the beauty of the design. I nevertheless would not have thought of removing them had they been in a sound condition ; but, so far from this, they were not only decayed but ready to fall out, being only held in their places by bars of wood across the interior of the windows, on the failure of which the mullions would have been precipitated into the church. Such being the case, I thought it would be foolish to renew them, and consequently restored the windows to their original form ; a course which has recently been strongly vindicated by Mr. Sharpe.

The three western portals had gabled terminations, which had been nearly obliterated. These have been restored, the old forms being accurately discovered and preserved.

The central tower was by no means in a satisfactory state, being very feeble, much cracked, and requiring very considerable repairs. It has now been rendered perfectly strong.

The rest of the church has been thoroughly repaired, the

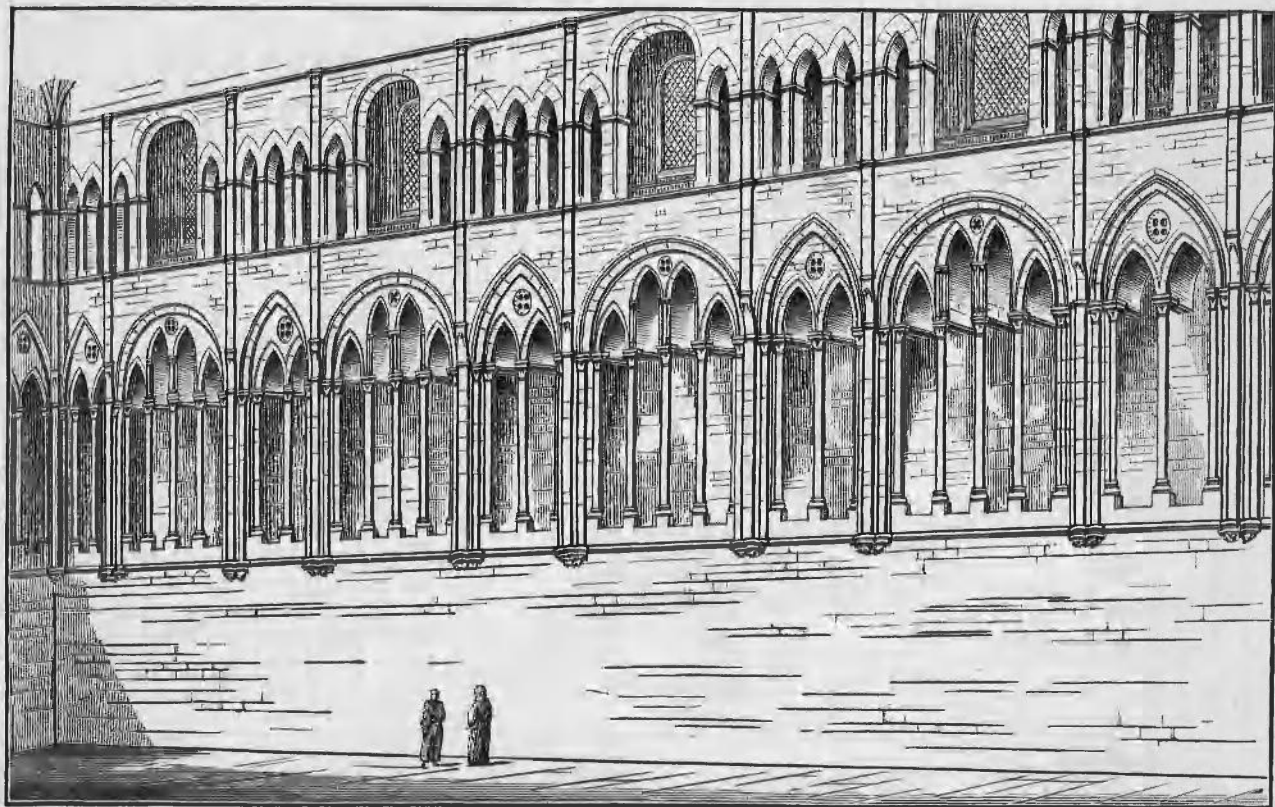
stone vaulting of the nave aisles completed, the roof and gable of the choir brought to its full height, and the oak vaulting reproduced, using the ancient carved bosses.

The nave roof, which was of modern date and very unpleasing, has received internally oak vaulting, founded in design on that of the transepts at York, which exactly suited its conditions. I trust that its external pitch will one day be raised to its proper height, a work which was only delayed for want of funds.

The transepts had received papier-maché vaulting, of a style which, had it been old, would have been half a century earlier than the walls which carried it; this has been removed, and the fifteenth century roofs restored or reproduced, though avoiding their intersection with the tower arches.

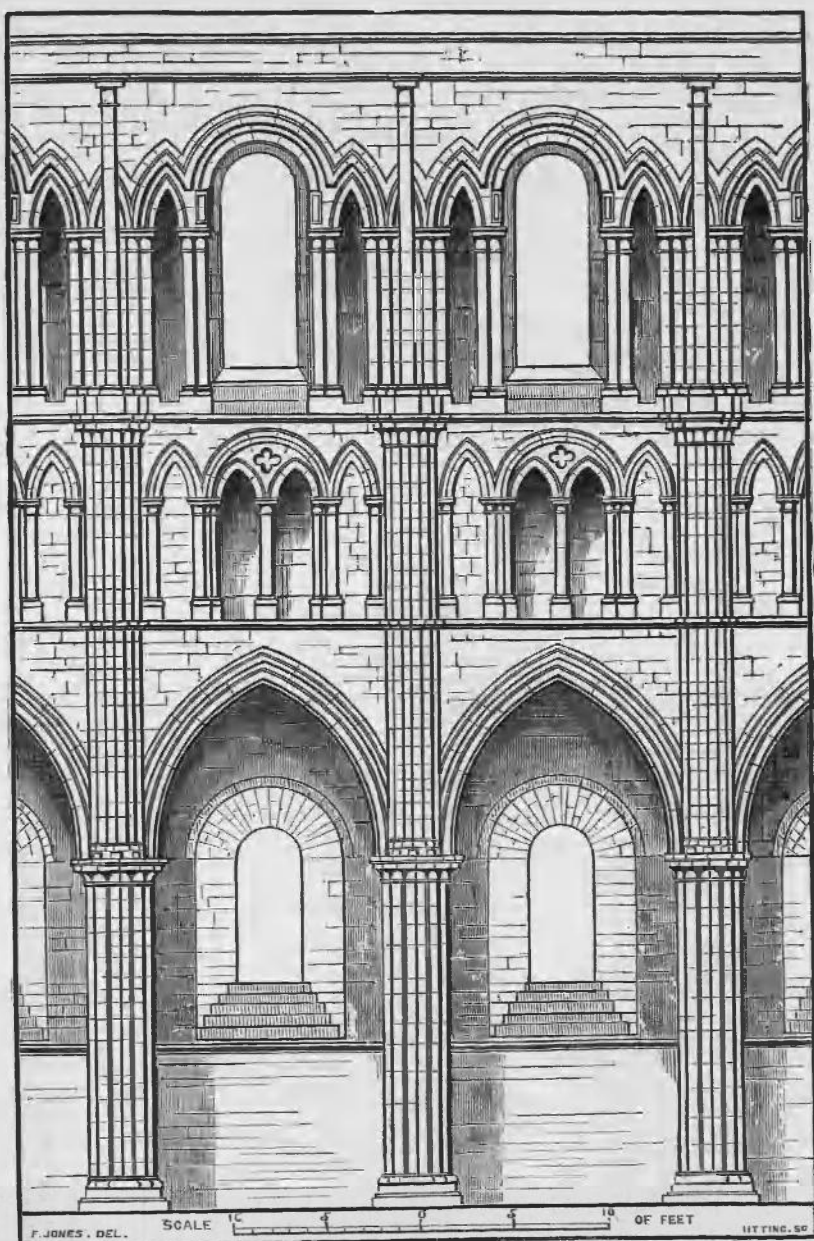
The choir was galleried on both sides. These galleries have been removed; beneath them were a series of enclosed pews, which had been formed in part of some interesting old work, of which I could not ascertain its origin. This I earnestly begged should be preserved, but I fear that it has been since dispersed. The stallwork, where damaged by later introduction, has been restored.

I must apologise for adding these details, but I think it desirable that works of this nature should be recorded, as a means of preventing misapprehension. I give a plan of the church as it probably stood in the time of Archbishop Roger; also a restoration of the arcading of his nave, and a portion of that of his choir.



Ripon Cathedral.

Probable view of Nave as built by Archbishop Roger.



Ripon Cathedral.
Two Bays of Archbishop Roger's Choir.