

## LULLINGTON CHURCH, SOMERSET.

By the REV. J. G. MARSHALL.

The church of All Saints, Lullington, is a small but most interesting building consisting of a Norman nave with a central tower and a chancel of the Decorated period. There is also on the south side of the nave, west of the tower, a chantry chapel in the Early English style.

From Domesday Book we learn that Lullington was one of the many manors in Somerset given by William I to Geoffry, Bishop of Coutances; and that while he let the other estates to various tenants, he kept that of Lullington and the adjoining one of Orchardleigh in his own hands.

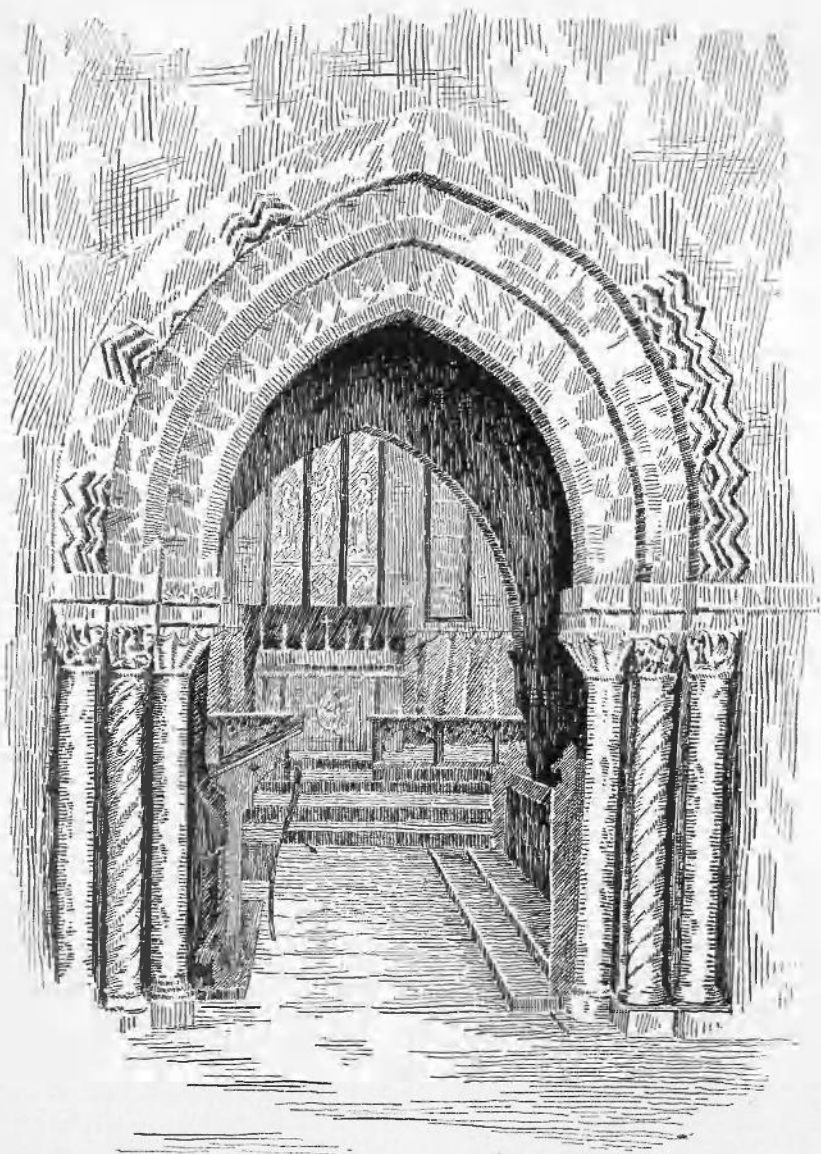
For some reason not known Geoffry seems to have taken a special interest in this small but beautiful property, and possibly intended to build a church there himself.

He may, indeed, have commenced the work, but it is rather more probable that after his death it was built by his nephew, who was Earl of Northumberland, as a memorial to the bishop, who was buried under the high altar. That the greatest care and best available talent was lavished on the little church is evident from the exceeding richness and beauty of the workmanship throughout, while the theory that it was the memorial to the bishop is borne out by various features in the church itself. For instance, during the restoration a sepulchral stone was discovered, broken indeed, but so far preserved that on it can easily be seen a cross of early date, of very beautiful design and most delicate workmanship in low relief; over the head of this cross is a hand extended in blessing, coming down from the clouds of heaven. This symbol, which is generally held to denote the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, is very rare on monumental memorials in England: there is one over the old crucifix in the south cloister of Romsey



*Milner & Bennet.*

LULLINGTON CHURCH. NORTH DOORWAY OF NAVE.



*To Marian Bennett.*

LULLINGTON CHURCH. WESTERN ARCH OF TOWER.

Abbey—and it is found occasionally on the Continent—there is one which closely resembles it in the Monastery of S. Sauveur near Coutances itself. This most interesting stone, which has now been built into the wall of the vestry, very possibly marked the resting place of the body of Bishop Geoffry.

Again, in the north wall of the nave there is a very beautiful and elaborate Norman doorway. On the capitals of the pillars of each side of this doorway are various emblems carved with great vigour. On the eastern side appear (1) Samson breaking the jaws of the lion; and (2) a peacock. Both these are symbols of the Resurrection of Our Lord:—Christ breaking the jaws of death being the idea conveyed by the first, and the yearly renewal of the brilliancy of the peacock's plumage making the second appropriate. The first of these symbols is very rare, the only other instance of which I have heard, being found in the Church of S. Pierre at Caen—the next diocese to Coutances. On the opposite side is the figure of a stag hunted by a centaur armed with a bow and arrow—representing the Christian soul attacked by the devil. While the idea of this symbol is common enough, the huntsman is generally represented as armed with a spear—but there is in the same church of S. Pierre at Caen a very similar carving in which he is represented with bow and arrow. It is certainly very remarkable that in these two churches so far apart, one so large and the other so small, there should be side by side these two rare symbolic carvings. Surely if not executed by the same hand we may well imagine that both might be the work of the same guild of artists.

This rich Norman doorway, which is in remarkable preservation, is also interesting in other ways as will be seen from the accompanying drawing. It has over it a niche containing a figure of Our Lord seated in glory. His right hand is raised in blessing while His feet rest upon the grotesque heads—representing the powers of evil trampled under foot—which form the decoration of the outer member of the arch below; a variation of the beak moulding as it is sometimes called. The tympanum of the doorway itself is filled up with a single stone on which is carved the representation of two animals—one

winged—fighting for or feeding upon—or supporting a tree or cross. I should be glad to know the meaning of this device, which I believe is not uncommon.

Returning to the interior of the church one cannot help being struck with the beauty of the aspect eastwards. The central space under the tower is always dark, but the chancel itself is beautifully light, and the altar stands out framed by the striking arch which supports the western side of the tower. This arch springs from a cluster of Norman columns—now slightly out of the perpendicular—the centre one of which on each side is ornamented with spiral mouldings and surmounted by a compound cushion capital. The four other capitals are carved with admirably executed and well preserved emblems of the four Evangelists. The arch was doubtless circular when the church was first built and with the chevron moulding all round. This moulding now runs up but a short way on each side, and the arch, which has been transformed into a pointed one, is now finished in plain stone, the soffits of the Norman voussoirs retaining their original curved surfaces as items of the circular arch. And that this is not the original form of the arch is further borne out by the fact that high up in the wall of the tower there is a piece of stone moulded in this way, and so probably taken from the arch itself when the tower was built or rebuilt in the fourteenth century.

The font is a very remarkable one. It is large, circular, of Early Norman date and elaborately decorated, and bears the following inscription in Roman letters:—

HOC FONTIS SACRO PEREUNT  
DELICTA LAVACRO.

There are also traces of another inscription on the edge which is now well nigh indecipherable.

The chantry on the south side is separated from the nave by a very good plain chamfered late Early English arch; the responds which support it are good and the capitals boldly carved with foliage. It has a beautifully proportioned East window, a mutilated piscina, and an aumbry.

In the chancel there is another piscina of inferior

design, a well-proportioned priests' door with ogeed and foliated head; and close by it a small two-light Decorated window of very good design, in addition to three other larger windows.

With so long an architectural history there are naturally many other features of interest in Lullington church that must further arrest the attention of students, but which cannot be enumerated here. And while the appearance of the outside of the building is greatly enhanced by the beauty of the colour which time has given to the local stonework—the tower and its details being particularly good—the situation of the church at one end of the village green is most picturesque.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lullington is three miles to the north of Frome and twelve miles south of Bath just off the Warminster road.