

ON LOW SET OPENINGS IN DANISH AND OTHER
SCANDINAVIAN CHURCHES.¹

By AMBROSE P. BOYSON, Esq.

I feel that I owe an explanation for the title under which I introduce this subject to the readers of the *Archaeological Journal*.

I have adopted it, in the first place, because it is a literal translation of the expression which Danish writers on the subject make use of when alluding to this feature in their churches; and, in the second place, because I venture to think it is a more correct method of description than those which we now, or in the past, have been accustomed to employ with reference to the corresponding feature in our churches; and, at the same time, as having the merit of not committing us to any special theory as to the use of these openings.

My attention was first drawn to the circumstance that openings of this character were found in Danish churches by a short article from the pen of the late Dr. Neale, F.S.A., in the *Journal of the Ecclesiological Society* for 1853, and, although its contents may be familiar to many of my readers. I think it desirable to make some quotations from it for the purpose of recalling the views which he entertained with reference to the number and distribution of these objects in Denmark.

With regard to their frequency, he writes :

“It is not well, if it be at all, known, that lychscopes occur in Denmark quite as frequently as in England. I have traced them in the proportion of twenty-eight out of one hundred and forty-eight churches clearly and distinctly, besides instances which are of less indubitable character, and those examples which I very probably missed, before I knew where to look for traces of the arrangement with the greatest chance of finding them.”

¹ Read at the monthly meeting of the Institute on March 7th, 1906.

And concerning distribution :

“Lychnoscopes occur much more frequently in the islands than in Jutland, and in the islands they are oftenest to be found in the southern portion, Oeroe, Langeland, Laaland, Falster and Moen. Of all the islands, Laaland seems to contain the most. They generally occur in churches which lie on or near to some high road, and on that side of the church by which the high road passes. In the wild parts of Jutland, where the churches occur in the middle of the most savage heaths and wildernesses, I believe I may safely say that they are never to be found. And by the same rule neither is there any trace of them in the very small islands.”

Dr. Neale mentions by name fourteen churches in which he considers he found this feature existing at the time he was travelling in the country. I have been at pains to visit several of the churches he alludes to, and, although my attempts to find what he records have been a series of failures, it is, perhaps, well that I should briefly refer to them, so that others should not waste time in endeavouring to trace them.

The first church he mentions is *St. Michael's* at Sleswig, where he found traces of a rude lancet, blocked, and in the usual position. (Sleswig was Danish when he wrote.) I visited this city in 1904, but the church he saw fell in when under repair in 1870, and the present building is entirely modern, and, unfortunately, bears no resemblance to the original structure, which was of very unusual plan, in the main circular, with an apse as an eastern termination. Others that he refers to, and which I have visited, are *Sæckjoberg*, *Juellinge*, and *Nakskov*, in the Island of Laaland, but no signs of what he describes can now be found.

Of *Mariboe*, the cathedral church of the diocese of Laaland Falster, he writes :

“The lychnoscopic arrangement here is striking. The ground plan of this church is remarkable, as reversing that commonly in use. The chancel has aisles, the nave has none; the dimensions of the former, both in length and height, are far greater than those of the latter, so that the first external view would lead a stranger to mistake the one for the other and to imagine that the builders of the church had orientated it west and east. Internally all along the aisles are low pointed recesses. But in the two westernmost recesses of the south aisle a square aperture has been broken through the brick wall at the height of about two feet. It would seem that in the first instance provision was not made for the want, whatever that want might be, and that a later and ruder hand opened the aperture in question.”

This paragraph is altogether rather puzzling. The cathedral at Mariboe was originally a Bridgetine church, and the churches of this Order always had the chief choir (for the Sisters) at the west end; thus, the building, a brick structure of the commencement of the fifteenth century, was intentionally orientated in that way, and the altar remains at the west end to this day. There are traces of two apertures at the west end of the south wall of the nave having been bricked up in recent years, and, presumably, these are what Dr. Neale saw open, but their position is not the correct one for low set openings in a Bridgetine church. The rules of this Order direct that "in the wall behind the seats of the Brother's choir, at the north end, there shall be five windows near the ground, through which the Sisters shall confess and receive the Body of God." The Sisters' conventual buildings were on the north side of this church; consequently the openings should be looked for at the east end of the north wall. There are ruins of a Bridgetine church at Mariager, in East Jutland, but no trace of low set openings remains. I shall refer to this subject again when alluding to the Bridgetine church at Vadstena, in Sweden.

With reference to the St. Hans Kirke at *Odense* (Plate I, Fig. 1), in the Island of Fyen, Dr. Neale makes the following observations:

"Here is one of the most remarkable lychnoscopes I ever saw. At the east end of the north side of the north aisle is a three-light window; under it, in a kind of projecting basement, are two very small apertures, in their breadth about double the height, and a well-turned four-centred arch. Contrary to the usual rule, these lychnoscopes are splayed on the outside very deeply, in the interior scarcely at all. It deserves particular notice that they are placed in the most conspicuous part of the whole church and opposite to the principal entrance to the churchyard. They can scarcely fail at once to catch the eye of anyone approaching the church, and the whole effect makes it clear that a conspicuous place was purposely chosen for them, because it was important that the most casual passer-by might have his attention directed to them. They are so small and so awkwardly situated for such a purpose, that to hand out anything through them (especially since the splay is external) must have been almost out of the question."

Here, again, there is no vestige of what he describes, a modern sacristy having been built on to the north

aisle at the end he alludes to. However, by the courtesy of Dr. Møllerup, Chief of the Historical Department in the National Museum of Copenhagen, I am able to exhibit a photograph of a drawing in their collection of the north side of the church made in 1877 (Plate I, Fig. 1), which shows the two openings to which Dr. Neale alludes. From their place in the church, I should be disposed to think they might have some different use from those openings in the normal position in the south wall of the chancel. In passing, it may be worth while to call attention to an interesting feature in this church in the shape of a shuttered opening in the south-west buttress, approached by stairs in the buttress (Plate I, Fig. 2), from which opening, tradition says, the preacher addressed lepers standing in the churchyard below; however, I should add that there is no documentary evidence confirmatory of this. The church, a brick structure, belonged to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and is of the commencement of the fourteenth century.

My want of success in tracing any of the examples which Dr. Neale recorded as existing in the Danish Islands, led me to enquire of Professor Kornerup, of Roskilde, who is considered the first authority on the churches in the Island dioceses, whether he could give me any information on the subject; and in replying he expresses himself as very astonished that Dr. Neale should have found any such openings in the Danish Islands, as he had visited nearly every ancient church in these districts, and had never seen one himself.

In the extract from Dr. Neale's paper, which I have already quoted, he expressed his conviction that this feature occurred more frequently in the Islands than in Jutland, and that in the wilder parts of Jutland they were practically non-existent. This opinion, however, is quite at variance with the researches of my friend, Mr. Uldall, architect, Knight of the Dannebrog, of Randers, who has made a special study of the ancient churches of Jutland and has visited every one of them himself. In his monograph on "The Windows of the Jutland Granite Churches," *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1894, pp. 289 and 296, he

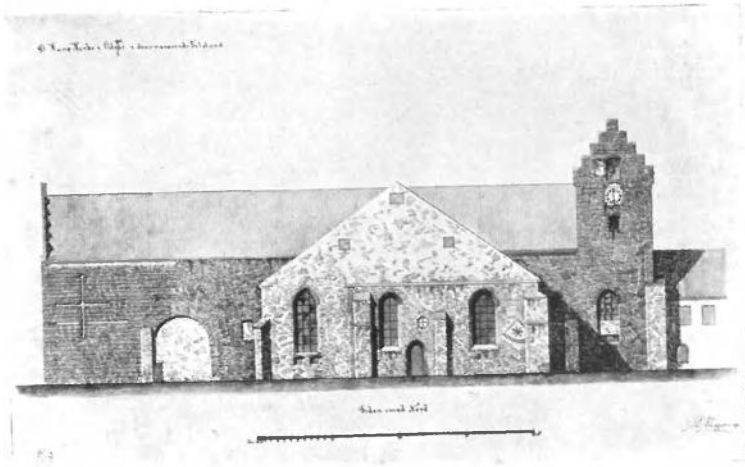


FIG. 1.—ST. HANS CHURCH, ODENSE.

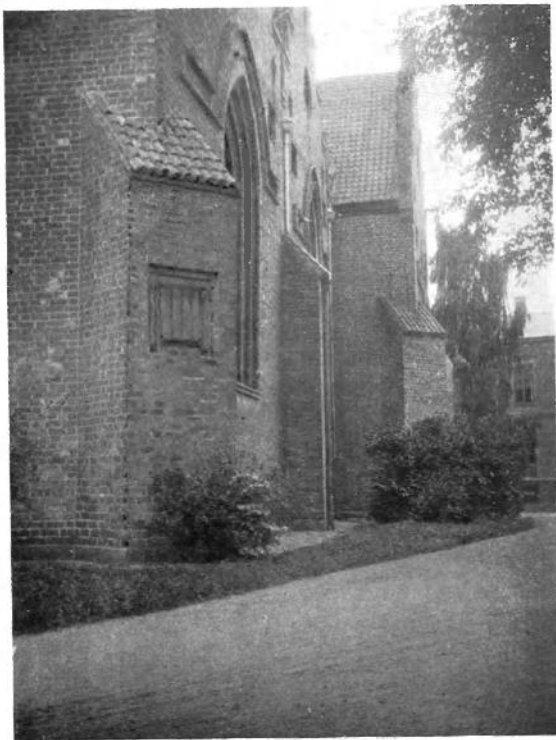


FIG. 2.—PULPIT IN BUTRESS OF ST. HANS CHURCH, ODENSE.

records no less than twenty examples, of which eighteen are in what may be called the normal position, *i.e.*, in the south wall of the chancel, and about 3 feet from the chancel arch wall, and he is of opinion that many more have existed, but are now so concealed by blocking and whitewash, that it is impossible to detect them.

Before proceeding to describe in detail those of the above-named low set openings which I have myself seen, it may be convenient to refer to the views of the Danish authorities, most conversant with the subject, as to the age of the granite churches of Jutland, and to give a brief and very general description of their leading characteristics. The number of ancient churches still existing in Jutland is between 900 and 950, of which about 700 are constructed of granite, a remarkable number when we consider that Jutland is not much larger in size than the combined counties of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, and that, at the period when these churches were built, by far the greater part of the country consisted of moorland and morass. The earlier and more carefully built are of hewn squared blocks, the later erections of rough or rubble granite. The oldest dated church is at Gjellerup, where, round the tympanum over the now blocked south door, is an inscription in Latin to the effect that the church was founded in the year 1140, but authorities are divided in opinion as to the time when the largest number were erected. Professor Jacob Helms, in his Preface to the drawings and plans of *Sallinglands Kirker, Rodding Herred*, executed by Mr. Uldall, expresses the opinion that a considerable number of those churches built of squared granite blocks were erected in the twelfth century, and that the remainder mostly date from the first half of the thirteenth century. On the other hand, Mr. Uldall, who has a far more intimate acquaintance with the Jutland churches than anyone else, is strongly convinced, supported by careful examination of all the churches in the peninsula, that extremely few were erected in the twelfth century; that the majority of those built of hewn granite blocks are of the thirteenth century, and that a not inconsiderable number of those constructed of rough or rubble granite were only erected in the

fourteenth century. There is, however, a consensus of opinion that the ruder rubble work was of a later period than the churches built of the well-finished granite squares. That the building of these granite churches extended over a rather long period of time is certainly no cause for wonder; indeed, considering the sparse population and the difficulty of working in such a hard material, it is evidence of great religious zeal that such a large number should have been erected within the time limit in question. It is perhaps superfluous to remark that granite was used for these earlier churches, because it was the only building material available; the country is covered with erratic blocks of this mineral, and no other building stone is found in the peninsula.

With regard to the architecture, they are all Romanesque in style, and vary in size according to the requirements of the district; the great majority are village churches, and are consequently small. In their original state they consisted of a nave, without aisles, terminating in a gable at each end; a chancel, also terminating in a gable, and, not infrequently, with an apse attached. The nave is usually 6 feet to 8 feet wider than the chancel. The outer walls are mostly about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick and the chancel arch wall about 3 feet. The chancel arch in the village church was generally narrow and low, springing from plainly moulded imposts and bearing a close resemblance to those in some of our early Norman churches. There are usually north and south doors, generally plain and rectangular, the jambs consisting of small granite squares, or an upright slab of granite; occasionally, and especially in the larger churches, they are round-headed with shafts, capitals and tympana. Priests' doors are uncommon in Jutland. The windows were few, high set, small, splayed internally and externally, and round-headed, the head generally monolithic. The number of windows in the nave was usually four, two in the north wall, and two in the south wall; but in some of the quite small churches there was only one in each wall. In the chancel there were usually three, one in each wall. Where an apse occurs, it was sometimes lighted by circular windows and occasionally, but very rarely, by alternate

circular and quatrefoil openings. Arcading of a pilaster-like character is also occasionally found on the apse. The original roofs were of timber. The churches in their pristine state were almost always without towers or bell turrets, and the bell was probably hung in a separate bell tower, as is still frequently the case in Sweden and Norway. The original fonts are of granite; the larger number plain, but a considerable proportion rudely sculptured. They are now almost invariably placed either in the north side of the chancel or under the chancel arch, but originally they stood in their proper place at the west end; the alteration in position probably took place about the year 1600. The alms dish frequently forms a cover to the font. The altars were originally of stone (in Jutland usually granite), and some still remain, although they are now mostly supplanted by wooden tables with altar-pieces of various dates from the sixteenth century to modern times.

So far our description has been of the church as originally built, but in later mediæval times, mostly in the fifteenth century, brick towers were added (generally with "saddle-back" roofs, the gables facing sometimes east and west, sometimes north and south; occasionally there are broach spires), thereby destroying or obscuring the original west gable, and at the same time the east gables both of nave and chancel were altered by rebuilding them in stepped brickwork. Probably about the same period a brick porch was added either to the south or north door, more often to the former, but sometimes to both. They were often of large size, and the Danish name, "weapon house," is significant of one of their original uses. About the same period the ancient timber roofs were to a great extent removed (they still survive in a few of the smaller churches, more especially in West Jutland), and brick vaulting of Gothic character was substituted. At the time of the Reformation further alterations were made; the ancient windows on the north side of the nave and chancel were blocked up, and those on the south side were either enlarged, or else they were bricked up and entirely new windows, often of a very domestic

character, were inserted at a lower level and of larger size than the original openings. The churches were also almost universally whitewashed, both on the exterior and interior, and it is only recently that they have been partially uncovered. The Reformers seem to have laid their hands on the Danish churches with even greater iconoclastic violence than in our own country, for piscinae, sedilia, and stoups seem almost entirely to have disappeared. Then for a long time the churches had rest, but within the last thirty or forty years the restorer has been busy on many of them, and, although it ill becomes us to cast stones, I must admit that their methods have been in many cases fully as drastic as with us.

Several Danish writers consider that a certain amount of English influence is exhibited, not only in the general plan of these granite churches, but also in the details, in connection with which we may recall the circumstance, that, irrespective of the monarchical tie, which existed in the early part of the eleventh century, there had been since then continuous commercial intercourse between the two nations. In support of their contention may be instanced the not unfrequently-occurring cushion capital, and the occasional use of the double billet and zig-zag mouldings.

It should be borne in mind, as accounting for some of the peculiarities of these buildings (amongst others the small size and high setting of their windows, and the occasional high setting of the tower door), that they were probably the result of the necessities of the period in which they were built, the churches being not unfrequently made use of as places of refuge in times of raid and unrest, if not as actually defensive positions.

I will now proceed to describe those of the low set openings, which I had time to visit, during a short journey I made in Jutland last August in company with my son, to whom I am indebted for the photographs I exhibit this evening.

I will first take the circular openings, of which Mr. Uldall mentions he has found seven examples in the usual position in the south wall of the chancel, and an eighth in the south wall of the nave. The first I visited

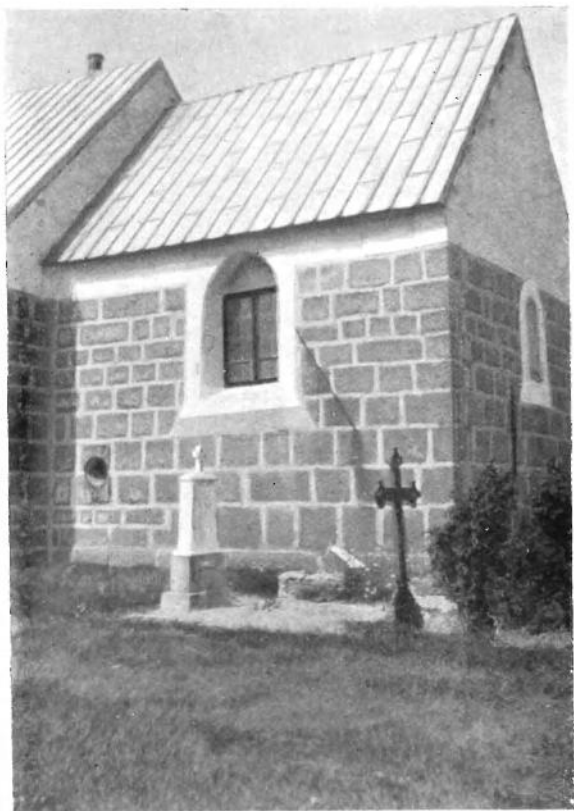


FIG. 1.—HASSING. CHANCEL.



FIG. 2.—HASSING. LOW SET OPENING.

was at *Bolling*, a village in West Jutland. It is a small church of the usual type, but without a tower, built of granite squares, the nave still whitewashed, but the chancel uncovered. The length of the chancel (externally) is 21 feet 6 inches; the width of the low and narrow chancel arch, 6 feet 4 inches. The opening, of which there is no trace internally, is a rather rude circle worked in two stones, the joint being vertical. The principal measurements are :

	Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	3	6
Distance from chancel arch wall	4	0
External diameter	1	0
Diameter at blocking	0	8

I regret to say that the attempts to photograph on this first day were all failures, probably owing to our not sufficiently appreciating the superior translucency of the atmosphere of Denmark.

Our next investigation was at *Hassing*, in North-West Jutland. This is a very interesting little village church, consisting of nave, with bell turret, and chancel. The chancel arch is 6 feet wide, and very reminiscent of our earliest Norman work. The opening, in the usual position, is a very pretty example, and is hewn from two stones, the joint being horizontal. (Plate II, Figs. 1 and 2.) Over the upper half of the circle is a rather elegant frieze of palmette pattern; the lower stone is plain, but apparently divided into three by false joints. The measurements are :

	Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	2	10
Distance from chancel arch wall	2	0
Diameter externally	1	6
Diameter at blocking	0	4

There is no trace of the opening inside the church.

Kousted, near Randers. This is a granite church, consisting of nave and chancel with brick tower and south porch. The north and south doors are round-headed with shafts, and over the south door is a tympanum. The round opening here is the one exception as regards position, it being in the south wall of the nave about 6 feet east of the south door. There

is no trace on the outside of the church, and the east wall of the south porch covers the point at which it must have come through. Internally it is a circular opening, enormously splayed and very close to the ground, as the following measurements will indicate :

	Ft.	Ins.
Diameter externally	2	2
Diameter at blocking	0	6
Depth to blocking	1	9
From centre of blocking to floor	1	11
From bottom of circle to floor	0	10

Pewing prevented any attempt at a photograph. It is difficult to imagine what can have been the use of this curiously-shaped and very low set opening, and I cannot help conjecturing that its purpose was a different one from those placed at the usual height and in the normal position.

Gaarslev, in West Jutland. (Plate III, Fig. 1.) The church has a granite nave and chancel, with large brick tower and modern south porch. In the usual position is a pretty circular opening ornamented round the edge of the circle with a slight cable pattern moulding.

Measurements, external.

	Ft.	Ins.
Height from ground	3	9
Height from plinth	2	6
Distance from chancel arch wall	3	0
Diameter externally	1	3
Diameter at blocking	0	9
Depth to blocking	0	8

Internally it is a rectangular opening.

	Ft.	Ins.
Width	1	9
Height	1	0
Depth to blocking	1	7

We pass on to the other class of openings, namely, those which are round-headed and, more or less, resemble a diminutive Romanesque window. Mr. Uldall mentions twelve examples which he has found in the usual position, and a thirteenth, at *Hvirring*, where, although it is in the south wall of the chancel and low set, the



FIG. 2.—SMÖLLERUP.



FIG. 1.—GAARSLY.



FIG. 2.—FAUSING, LOW SET OPENING.



FIG. 1.—HELSTRUP.

distance from the chancel arch wall is 8 feet 6 inches (Danish measure).

The first I investigated was at *Smollerup*, an inland village in the central part of Jutland (Plate III, Fig. 2). This externally is a disappointing example, as it is blocked flush with the wall, the blocked space measuring 17 inches by 10 inches.

				Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth (double)	...	...	...	1	9
Height from ground	...	...	...	3	0
Distance from chancel arch wall	...	...	...	3	0

Internally it is an irregular rectangular opening splayed.

				Ft.	Ins.
Width externally	...	...	...	2	0
Height externally	...	...	...	2	6
Depth to blocking	...	...	...	2	0
From sill to floor	...	...	...	1	6

I exhibit a photograph of its external appearance in order to explain Mr. Uldall's statement, that he believes there are many more of these apertures than we now know of. In this instance had the chancel remained with its covering of whitewash, and had there been no internal evidence, it would have been quite impossible to have traced it.

Helstrup. (Plate IV, Fig. 1.) Here, too, there is not much evidence of the shape of the opening, but there is a trace of the round-head.

Measurements.

				Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	...	...	...	3	8
Height from ground	...	...	...	5	0
Distance from chancel arch wall	...	...	...	2	0
Height of blocked space	...	...	...	1	9
Width of blocked space...	...	...	...	0	8

There is no trace inside the church.

Auning (Plate V, Figs. 1 and 2), also in the district of Randers. This is a very typical church, the nave, chancel, and apse of granite, all unfortunately still enveloped with whitewash, the tower and south porch of brick with stepped gables. The groined vaulting of the

nave and chancel retains its ancient colour decoration. The font is at the west end of the church. There are three rude aumbries in the chancel. The low opening is in the usual position and the measurements are:

External.

					Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	...	...	...	...	3	8
Height from ground	...	...	...	...	4	6
Distance from chancel arch wall	...	...	...	...	2	5
Height from sill to head	...	...	...	...	2	3
Width	...	...	...	...	1	11
Depth to blocking	...	...	...	...	0	7

Internal.

					Ft.	Ins.
Sill to floor	...	...	...	...	3	2
Height outside splay	...	...	...	...	3	2
Width of sill	...	...	...	...	3	3
Height at blocking	...	...	...	...	2	0
Width at blocking	...	...	...	...	0	8

Fausing, likewise in Randers Amt. (Plate IV, Fig. 2.) The round-headed opening is in the normal position and is blocked by brick.

					Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	...	...	...	...	3	5
Height from ground	...	...	...	...	4	0
Distance from chancel arch wall	...	...	...	...	2	11
From sill to head	...	...	...	...	2	0
Width of sill	...	...	...	...	1	0
Width at blocking	...	...	...	...	0	8

No trace internally.

Ørsted, in Randers Amt (Plate VI, Fig. 1); a granite church with large brick tower and broach spire. There is a fine north door, with tympanum representing the Transfiguration. The south door (blocked) has sculptured jambs and tympanum. There are traces of a hagioscope through the chancel arch. The round-headed opening, in the usual place, has a slight moulding at the springing of the head.

External measurements.

					Ft.	Ins.
Height from plinth	...	...	...	...	4	6
Height from ground	...	...	...	...	5	0
Distance from chancel arch wall	...	...	...	...	2	11
Height to head	...	...	...	...	1	8
Width	...	...	...	...	0	7



FIG. 1.—AUNING. THE CHURCH.



FIG. 2.—AUNING. LOW SET OPENING.

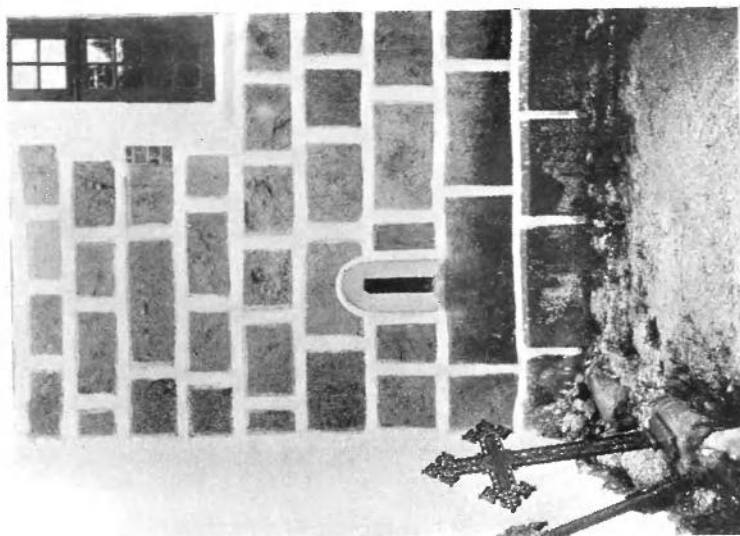


FIG. 2.—SMIDSTRUP. LOW SET OPENING.



FIG. 1.—ØRSTED. LOW SET OPENING.

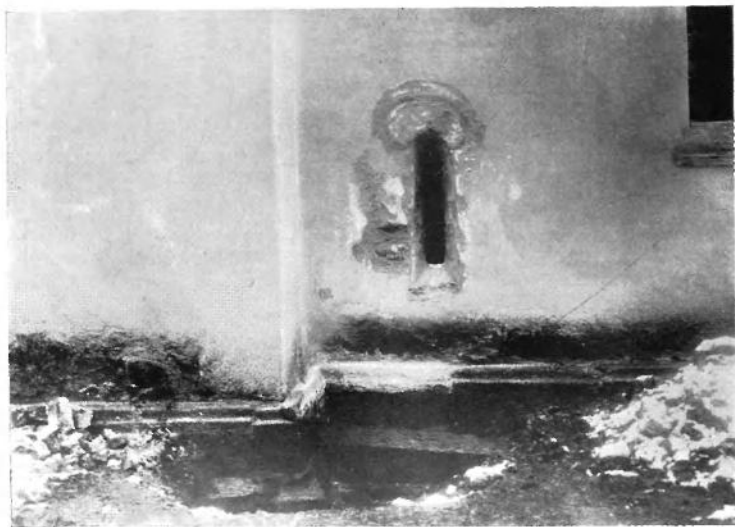


FIG. 1.—ERRITSÖE. LOW SET OPENING, EXTERIOR.

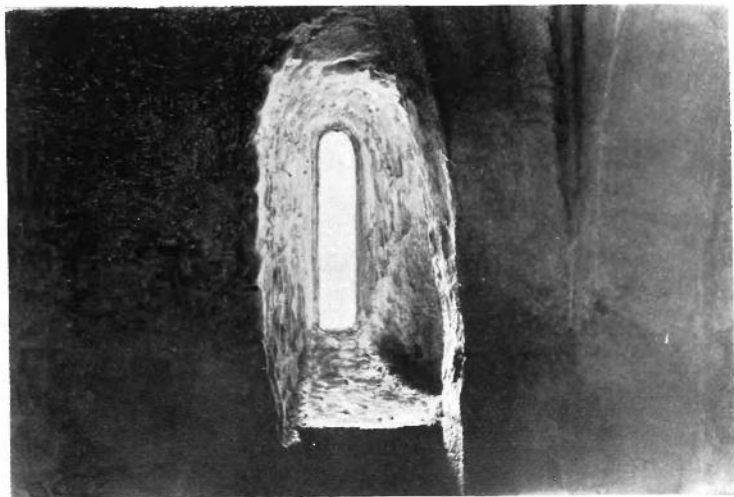


FIG. 2.—ERRITSÖE. LOW SET OPENING, INTERIOR.

Inside the church it is used as an aumbry, and the opening is closed with an iron door.

Smidstrup, Veile Amt. (Plate VI, Fig. 2.) This church I have not visited myself, but, by the kindness of Dr. Mollerup, I am able to exhibit a very good photograph of its rather interesting low set opening. It is in the usual position, but I have no measurements other than the height from the ground, which is given as 0.75 m. The cement joints of the granite squares stand out in greater prominence than usual, and even exceed in ugliness the somewhat similar method employed in certain restorations in our own country.

I have again to express my obligations to Dr. Mollerup for enabling me to show two photographs of an opening of this class, which existed in the now demolished church of *Erritsoe*, near Fredericia (Plate VII, Figs. 1 and 2). This church was pulled down in the year 1898, and the photographs were taken at the time of demolition. They are interesting as showing the appearance of one of these openings, when the blocking had been removed. Of the size of the opening we have a record in the oak frame found embedded in the wall, now preserved in the National Museum (Historical Section) at Copenhagen, and which measures 2 feet 5 inches in height, 5 inches wide at the head, and 6 inches at the base. There is no groove for glass. Similar oak frames have occasionally been found in cases where ancient blocked windows of usual character have been opened out, and several are to be seen at the National Museum. Professor Baldwin Brown refers to an analogous arrangement occurring in double splayed windows of Saxon date in England, where

“the actual opening for light is at times cut in a thin slab of stone or plank of wood built into the wall at the centre of the thickness.” (*Arts in Early England*, vol. ii, p. 93.)

The external measurements were (in Danish measure):

	Ft. Ins.
Height from double plinth	1 5 $\frac{1}{2}$
Height from ground	3 8
Distance from chancel arch wall	1 10

but internally the splay came to within 11 inches of this point.

Of low set openings in Sweden I have only heard of examples in two places, and these are mentioned in an article by Dr. Emil Ekhoﬀ on *Husaby Church* in Vester-gotland. Plates VIII, IX. (*Svenska Fornminnesforeningens Tidskrift*, vol. x, p. 333). This church, of early date and Romanesque style, is built of sandstone and consists of an aisleless nave and a small low chancel terminating in an apse. The tower is square, with semi-circular stair-turrets on the north and south sides, and is, possibly, earlier than the rest of the church. Of the low set opening, he writes:

“In connection with the windows should be mentioned another wall opening, which is of a very puzzling nature. Its position is in the south wall of the chancel, immediately contiguous to the west end and very near to the ground. The opening is round-headed in a deeply splayed recess, the sill being stepped and steeply ascending. The dimensions at the light opening are very small, only about 0·15 m. in height and 0·13 in width. Externally it is blocked, and on the outside of the chancel wall there appears only a trace of the round-head. The distance from the ground, which is somewhat, although not considerably, higher than it was originally, to the opening is only about 0·90 m. Internally the lowest step of the sill is only 0·5 m. from the floor. The purpose of this singular opening is, as already said, quite puzzling. It has in the main, although of such small dimensions, the form of a real window. That it could not have served for giving light seems to be apparent. Its effect in this respect, both from its position and size, would have been absolutely infinitesimal, and it is moreover unthinkable that anyone would arrange an opening for the purpose of admitting light so near to the ground.

“In St. Bridget’s *Revelationes extravagantes* it is said with regard to the conventual church at *Vadstena*:

“‘The wall, which is placed behind the Brothers’ choir towards the Sisters on the north, shall have five apertures near the ground through which the Sisters should make their confessions and receive the Holy Sacrament.’

“Possibly this direction is not without significance with reference to the foregoing question. It is true St. Bridget may have introduced something new, but it is more likely that she thereby followed a here and there existing custom. The five small apertures are still in existence, and each has two seats internally. Their position is in the north wall of the choir, obviously because the cloister buildings of the Sisters lay on that side of the church; but as the high choir at *Vadstena* is placed in the west, these openings have the same position with regard to the altar as those at *Husaby* and in the Danish churches, *i.e.*, on the Epistle side. If we imagine the church at *Vadstena* orientated with the altar in the east, the openings would be just in the same position as the last named, that is, on the south side of the choir; and before all there is this remarkable circumstance in common, that they are placed near the ground.”

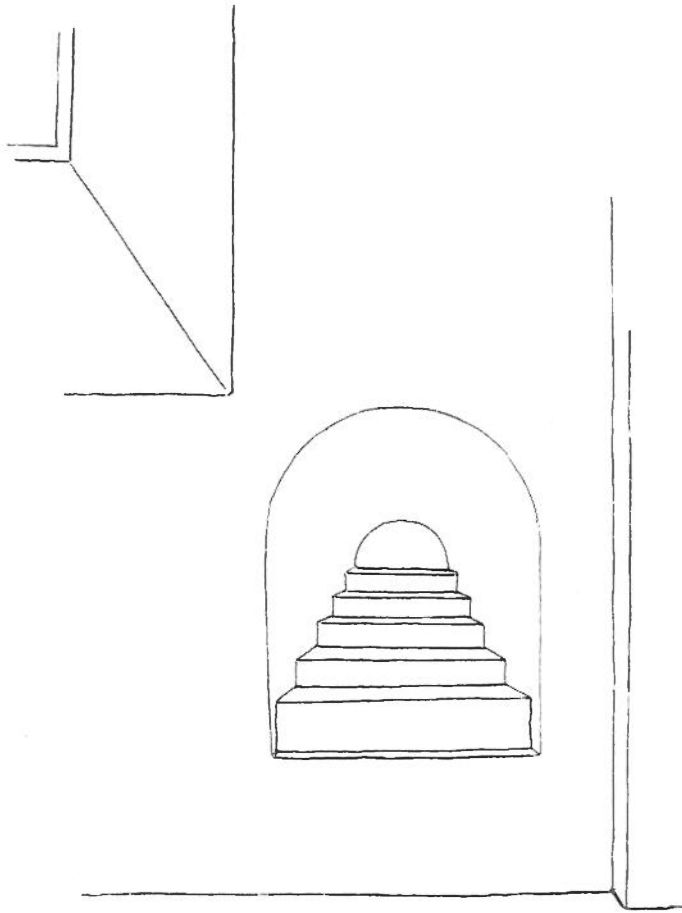


FIG. 2.—HUSABY CHURCH, VESTERGÖTLAND.
LOW SET OPENING, INTERIOR.

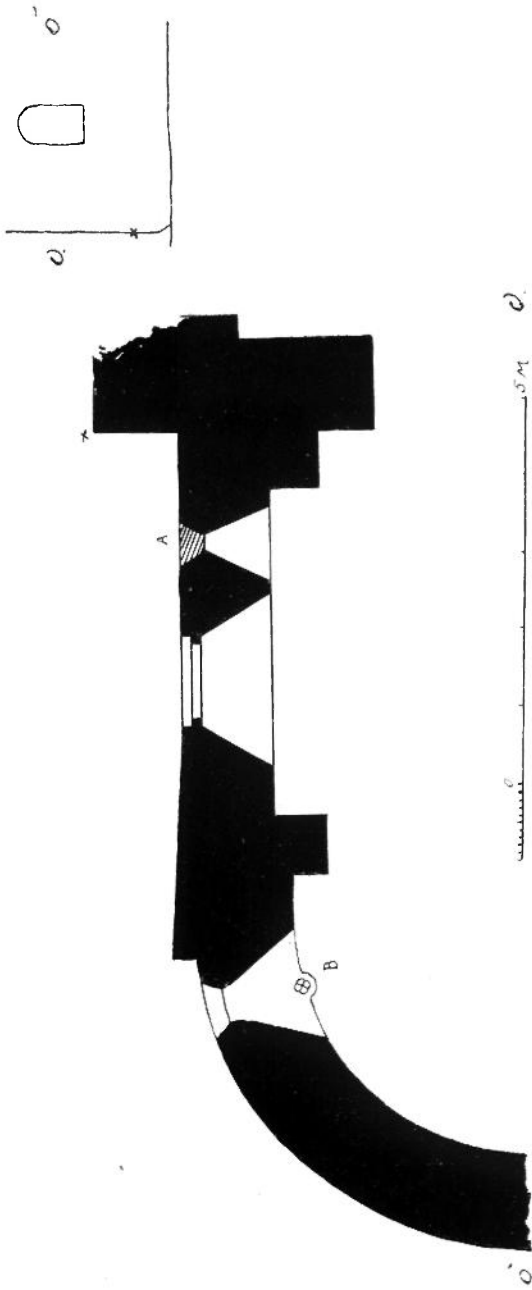
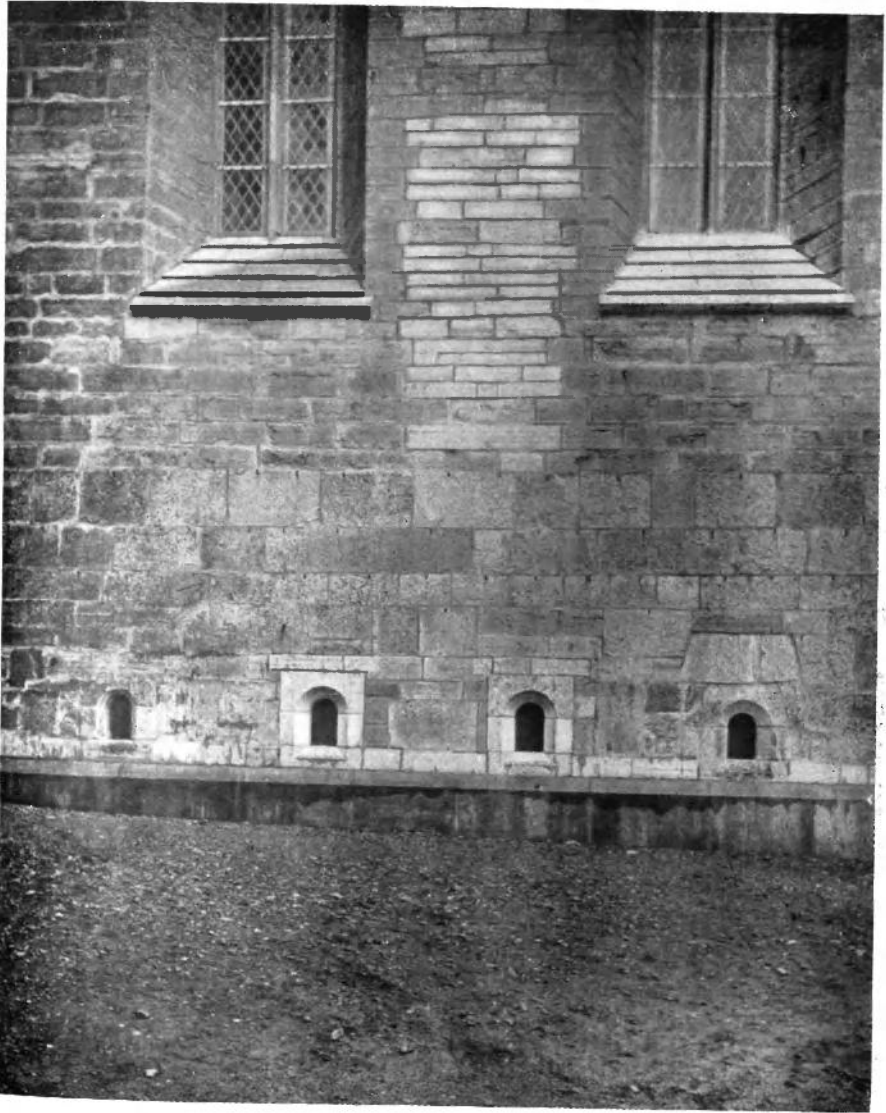


FIG. 1.—HUSABY CHURCH, VESTERGÖTLAND.

A.—Low set opening. B.—Piscina.



CONFESSIONAL LOW SET OPENINGS IN THE BRIDGETINE CHURCH AT VADSTENA (SWEDEN).



CONFESSONAL LOW SET OPENING (ENLARGED) VADSTENA CHURCH.



FIG. 1.—GAMLE GLEMMINGE, NORWAY. THE CHANCEL.

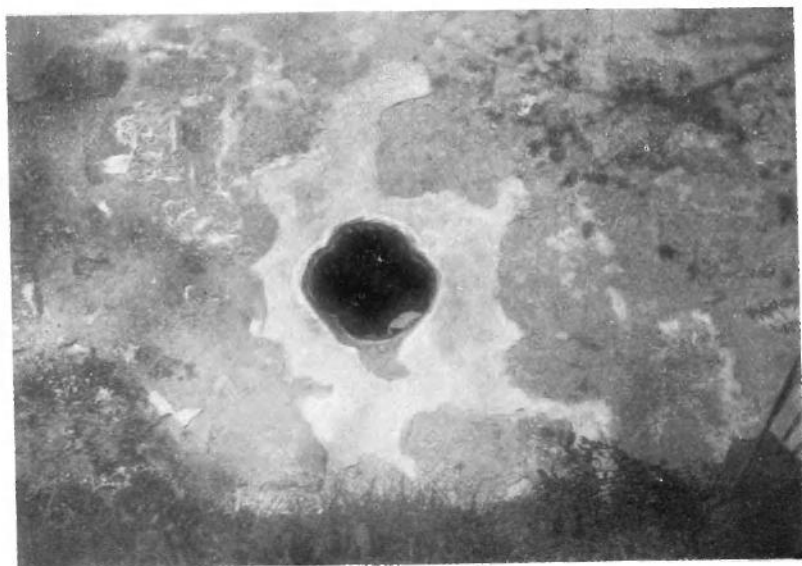


FIG. 2.—GAMLE GLEMMINGE, NORWAY. LOW SET OPENING.

The priest of Husaby Church, in a pamphlet issued after its restoration (1900-1902), writes with reference to this opening :

“ A little window, which has been called a communion window, has been opened in the south wall of the choir near the ground. The window has taken its name from the circumstance that formerly, in the Middle Ages, when a more stringent church discipline prevailed, such persons who, on account of grave offences could not enter the church, might make their confession outside this window and through it afterwards receive the Sacrament.”

I have not had an opportunity myself of visiting the church at Vadstena, and I am therefore unable to give any measurements, but I have procured photographs of the north wall at the eastern end showing the openings referred to by Dr. Ekhoff. (Plates X, XI.) It was impossible to photograph them from the interior as they are closed up with iron plates. This church (built 1395-1424) was the Mother Church of the Bridgetine Order, and at that time seventy-four establishments of the Order were in existence, occurring chiefly in Northern Europe.

With regard to Norway, the only examples I know of are two at *Gamle Glemminge* Church near Fredriksstad (Plate XII, Figs. 1 and 2), which have been brought under my notice by my son, who has taken the photographs I now exhibit. They occur in a chapel east of the present chancel, now used as a mortuary chapel, but as the entrance to it is evidently not earlier than the seventeenth century, I conjecture that in pre-Reformation times it was probably the sacrarium. They are rude quatrefoils, exactly opposite each other in the south and north walls, and are about 3 feet from the ground. The church is of a quite early date.

Although we have but few openings in England so small as the smallest of the Scandinavian examples, there are yet a certain number, and I am indebted to Mr. F. T. S. Houghton, of Birmingham, who has been engaged in an investigation of Warwickshire Low Side Windows, for drawing my attention to an opening in the south wall of the chancel of Sheldon Church, about seven miles east of Birmingham, which, as regard its general character and size, bears a close resemblance to the Danish examples we have been considering. It is in the usual position, about 3 feet from the ground,

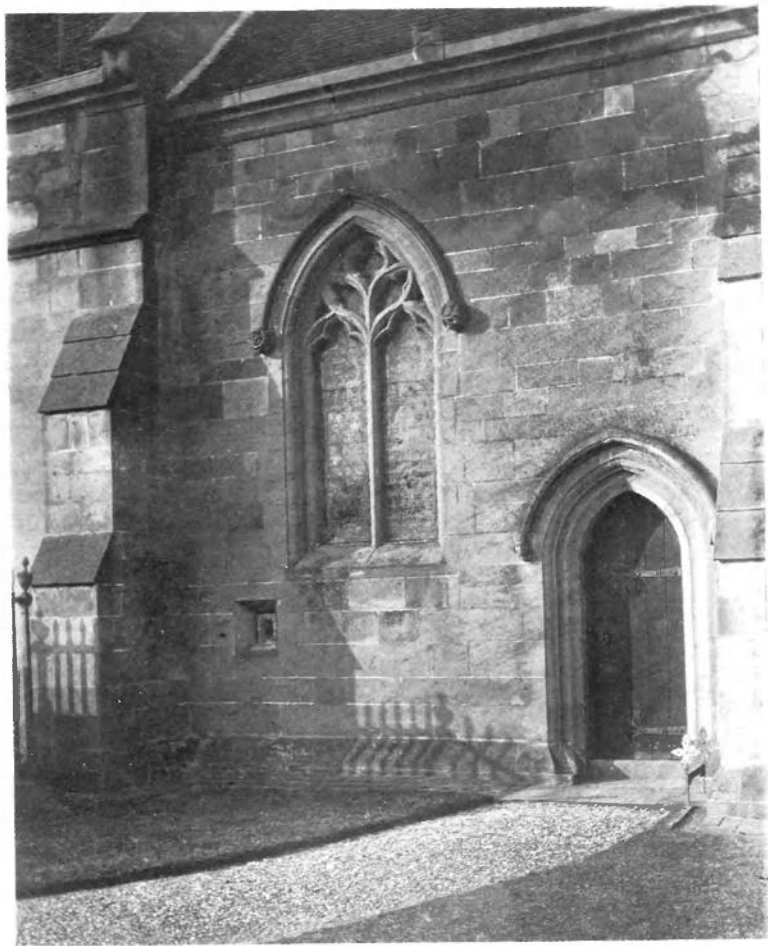
measuring 18 inches by 16 inches outside the splay, and only $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches at the actual opening, which is cut out of a single stone. I have also to thank him for the photograph, which is reproduced in Plate XIII.

It was not my intention in the present Paper to enter into the discussion as to the use or uses of these openings; on the other hand, it may be asked, not without reason, that I should place on record the opinions of those Scandinavian authorities who have given thought to the subject, where I have had an opportunity of ascertaining them. From the extract already given on the Swedish churches at Husaby and Vadstena, we know the views of Dr. Ekhoﬀ, and Dr. Møllerup so far concurs in them, that he thinks we should not overlook the regulations in the Bridgetine churches, when considering the matter; on the other hand, he would not entirely exclude from our purview the possibility of their having been used for dealing with lepers.

Mr. Uldall, from whom I have so frequently quoted, writes in his treatise on *The Windows of the Jutland Granite Churches*:

Till now I have not succeeded in finding a satisfactory explanation for these remarkable small low-placed openings in the south side of the chancel. In Bolling the villagers say that the round hole was for the purpose of depositing gifts from those cured at an adjacent holy well. At the well was once a chapel, and a field which belongs to the parsonage is still called Chapel Meadow. This explanation contents me just as little as what has been narrated in other places, *i.e.*, that the openings were used for gross sinners who might not enter the church to confess and obtain absolution. It seems to me most probable that the openings have been used as look-out holes to observe from the chancel what was taking place outside the church—for instance, if a funeral procession approached, for which purpose the usual windows were placed far too high. One must not, however, entirely reject the idea that these openings may have served as holes for archers, as it is well known that these churches, with their few and well-secured entrances, their thick walls, and high-set small windows, often served as regular places of refuge in times of unrest. At least it is noteworthy that these openings were nearly always made at the same place and in one of the church's so-called dead corners, in which the enemy would be safe against the defender's spears and arrows from the windows of the nave.

“On the other hand, if we suppose that these openings were made exclusively for the admission of light, it is in any case somewhat puzzling that any one should have gone to the trouble of so much



SHELDON CHURCH, WARWICKSHIRE.

work as the hewing out would demand, only for the purpose of obtaining the small amount of light which a round hole of about 5 inches in diameter would afford, and some of them are not larger than this."

With reference to the round-headed openings, Mr. Uldall proceeds :

"The above-described oblong openings may, like the before-mentioned round ones, most likely have been used for looking-out purposes, and many circumstances go to prove that they were formerly much more numerous than at present. In many churches, as at Rostrup (Hobro), Lyngaa (Randers), Veirum (Struer) and Aal (Varde), there are set out of place in the wall hewn granite stones which would appear to have been used as blocking stones to such small round-headed openings."

With regard to the foregoing conjectures, that they may have been intended either for look-out holes or for archers, Dr. J. Helms and other writers point out that their position in the church, close to the angle between the chancel and nave, as well as their small size, would only admit of a very circumscribed view, while, in addition to this disadvantage, their nearness to the ground would render them very inconvenient for the purpose of discharging arrows; and these objections appear to me weighty.

There are, however, three points in connection with this part of the subject, which, although somewhat negative in their character, I venture to think are worthy of consideration. The first is that the extremely small size of most of these Scandinavian openings renders untenable nearly all the theories recapitulated by the late Mr. I. H. Parker in his early, but exhaustive, treatise written some sixty years ago and published in Vol. IV of our *Journal*. The second, that the almost universal closing of these openings appears to connect them with a rite or use which ceased at the time of the Reformation. The third, that those openings which are in the normal position, *i.e.*, at the west end of the chancel, whether in the south or north walls, may be grouped together as intended for the same use or uses, whereas those occurring in other positions in the church were possibly constructed for other purposes. I will refer to one instance to illustrate my meaning. In the interesting Paper contributed by the Rev. H. Bedford Pim, "On the Origin and Uses of Low Side Windows in

Ancient Churches," in Vol. LXII of our *Journal*, an illustration is given (Plate VII, Fig. 12) of the curious little window at the extreme east end of the south chancel wall of Limpsfield Church (Surrey). Having formerly resided in this parish, I know the window well. Close to it in the east wall are the remains of an oven and chimney darkened by smoke, which no doubt was used for the preparation of the Sacramental wafers, and my friend Mr. J. Oldrid Scott, F.S.A., is of opinion that this and other windows of this nature placed at the east end of the church were for the purpose of giving light to a small sacristy behind the altar. He instances one in the east wall of the chancel of Blakeney Church, Norfolk, and that exhibited in Mr. Pim's Paper at the east end of the south chancel wall of Grafton Underwood Church, Northants (Plate VIII, Fig. 14), may have served a similar purpose. On the other hand, those which occur at the west end of the north aisles have often proved to be the openings to the cells of anchorites, of which there are examples at Edlesborough (Bucks), Stanbridgeford (Beds) and Leeds (Kent).

The following tables give the measurements of the Danish low set openings on the external wall, so far as I have been able to collect them :

ROUND OPENINGS.

	External diameter.	Diameter at blocking.	Height from plinth.	Distance from chancel arch wall.	Measure.
Bolling	Ft. Ins. 1 0	Ft. Ins. 0 8	Ft. Ins. 3 6	Ft. Ins. 4 0	English.
Skallerup	1 2½	—	—	—	Danish.
Gaarslev	1 3	0 9	2 6	3 0	English.
Orum	1 4	—	2 6	—	Danish.
Sonderhaa	1 10-11	—	3 1½	—	Danish.
Hassing	1 6	0 4	2 10	2 0	English.
Tørring	1 4¾	0 10½	2 1½ double plinth	—	Danish.

ROUND-HEADED OPENINGS.

	Outer height.	Width.	Height from plinth.	Height from ground.	Distance from chancel arch wall.	Measure.
Orsted	Ft. Ins. 1 8	Ft. Ins. 0 8	Ft. Ins. 4 6	Ft. Ins. 5 0	Ft. Ins. 2 11	English.
Helstrup....	1 9	0 8	3 8	5 0	2 0	English.
Fausing	2 0	1 0	3 5	4 0	2 11	English.
Tulstrup....	2 9	2 1½	2 6½	—	—	Danish.
Auning	2 3	1 11	3 8	4 6	2 5	English.
Smollerup	—	—	1 9	3 4	3 0	English.
Hvirring....	2 2	1 0	double plinth 3 8	—	—	Danish.
Dragstrup	c. 55	c. 12	c. 49	c. —	c. 92	French.
Smidstrup	—	—	—	75	—	French.

To anyone desirous of studying the early Romanesque architecture of Northern Europe, I can confidently recommend a tour in Jutland. Nowhere else can so many churches of this style be found in such a limited area and it can be reached from London *via* Harwich and Esbjerg in twenty-four hours. The hotels are clean and sufficiently comfortable, the inhabitants obliging and hospitable, and the most interesting of the churches are within easy distances of a railway.

Before concluding, I desire to place on record the obligations I am under to several Danish gentlemen for assistance rendered to me in various ways. First to Dr. Möllerup, the courteous Chief of the Historical Section of the National Museum, Copenhagen, and to his able assistants for having directed me to Mr. Uldall, the source from which most of my information has been derived, and for having furnished me with several important photographs. Secondly, to Mr. Uldall himself, who at much sacrifice of time has supplied me with a great part of the facts in this Paper, and without whose assistance it would have been impossible for me

to visit so many churches in the limited time at my disposal. Finally I have to thank Professor Kornerup, of Roeskilde, and Professor Haupt, of Eutin, for kindly answering my inquiries with reference to churches in their districts; and Dr. Ekhoﬀ of the National Museum, Stockholm, for having furnished me with particulars of the openings at Husaby and Vadstena.

LIST OF WORKS REFERRED TO.

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