

EXETER CATHEDRAL CHURCH.
EARLY FOURTEENTH-CENTURY WINDOW, NORTH QUIRE CLERESTORY.

THE PAINTED GLASS OF EXETER CATHEDRAL
AND OTHER DEVON CHURCHES.¹

By F. MORRIS DRAKE.

Devonshire has been specially ill-served in the preservation of ancient stained glass. Our ancestors would seem, if possible, to have been greater vandals than their contemporaries in the adjoining counties, so that very few complete or nearly complete mediaeval windows survive to the present day. In Exeter and the adjoining district only nine important examples remain, four in our cathedral and five in Doddiscombsleigh church.

That this paucity is due to destruction and not to any original lack of painted glass in our churches is shown by the diary of Richard Symonds,² a captain of horse in the royalist forces during the civil war. He was a keen herald, and made a point of noting many of the monuments and coats of arms in the churches and manor-houses which he visited. In July, 1644, when passing through Exeter on his way to Cornwall, he jotted down the blazonings of seven or eight shields in the cathedral; and on his return from the victorious campaign against the parliamentary forces under the earl of Essex, he seems to have made a more or less methodical list of the shields in every window. The list was not quite complete, but it must have been very nearly so, for he noted no less than one hundred and forty examples. Of those less than twenty now remain.

Evidences of like destruction exist everywhere throughout the county. Some small scraps, a shield or two, a mutilated figure perhaps, or a few tracery eyelets, can be seen in most of the churches in the district, and yet with the exception of those in the cathedral and Doddiscombsleigh church, scarcely a window in Devonshire exists in a

¹ Read before the Institute, 25th July, 1913.

² *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army* (Camden Soc.) 1859, pp. 38 and 83.

state even approaching completeness. This is the more to be regretted because the fragments that remain are almost invariably fine work. A good deal of mediocre and some poor glass was painted at every period: in nearly every county in England one can find windows or fragments of windows in which draughtsmanship and technique are below the average of present-day glass painting. In

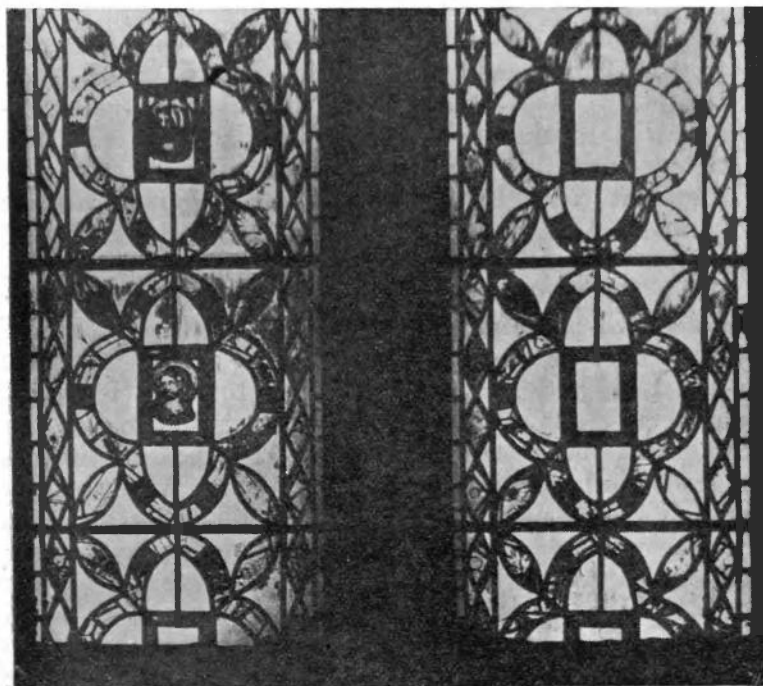
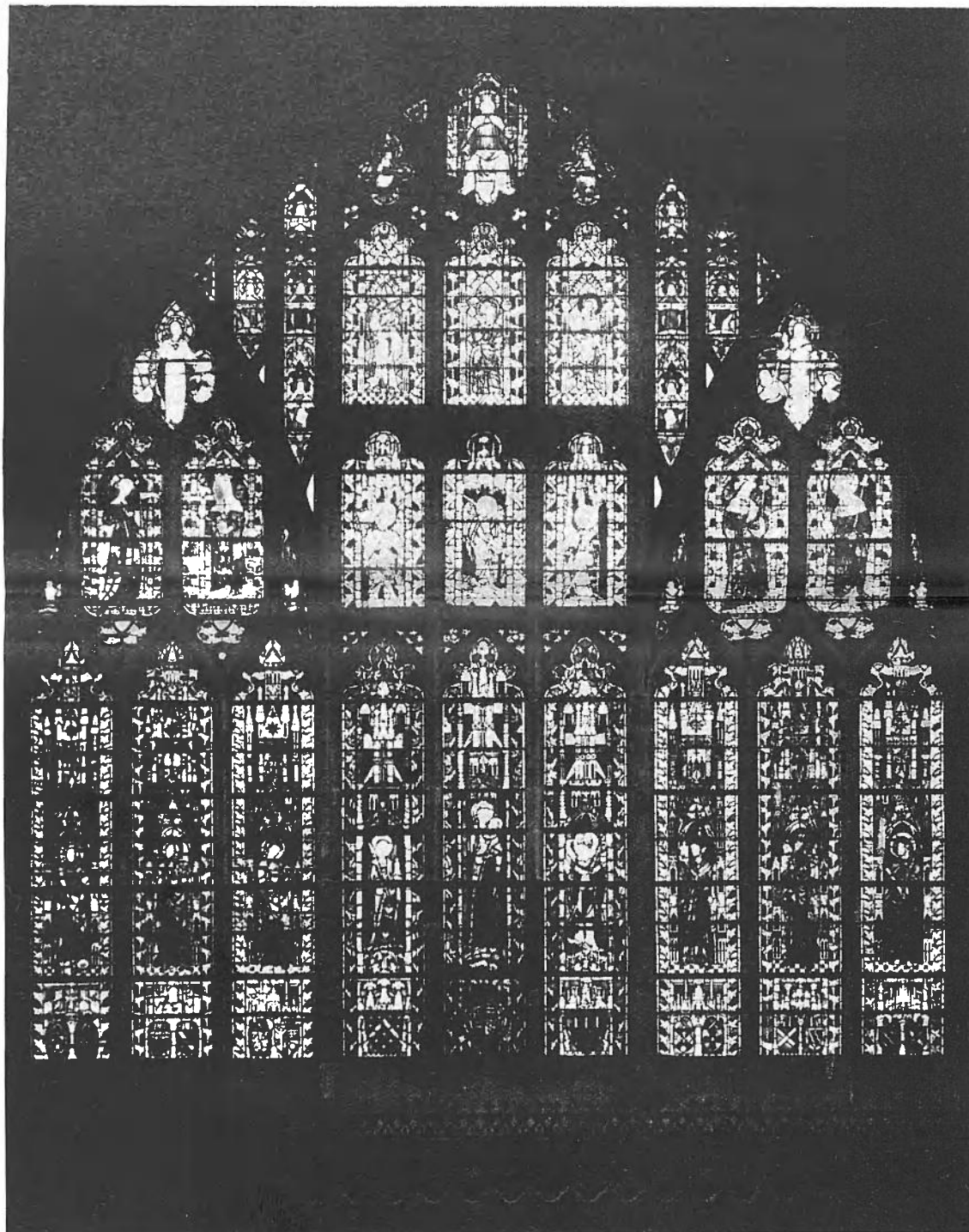


FIG 1. EXETER CATHEDRAL. MODERN GLAZING IN THE QUIRE INCORPORATING FRAGMENTS OF FOURTEENTH-CENTURY PAINTED GLASS.

Devonshire, on the contrary, mediaeval work is often almost masterly in conception and design, and in technique and workmanship it is nearly always exceptionally good.

A series of fifteenth-century shields of arms remaining at Ashton-on-Teign, the parish adjoining Doddiscombs-leigh, are well worth inspection, as showing the high-water mark of careful workmanship. They occupy the tracery



EXETER CATHEDRAL CHURCH. THE GREAT EAST WINDOW.

openings of the three easternmost windows of the north aisle, and display the impalements of the family of Chudleigh. Some of the shields are sheer *tours de force*, notably the Courtenay arms in the east window, where the *torteaux* were originally inserted in holes drilled in the shield, and the Pomeroy impalement, where the body of a rampant lion, cut with the greatest pains by the glazier, has been subjected to great risk by the abrasion of an annulet upon its shoulder. The Doddiscombsleigh glass is very good, but that at Ashton is better, and is possibly by a French painter¹; but if so he must have worked for some time in this county, for not only is the work on the Ashton glass painstaking in a marked degree, but a fragment by the same man exists in Exeter cathedral. These Ashton tracery-shields, with one or two fragmentary figures, are all that remain of what must once have been a most remarkable series of windows.

Much of the destruction in our country churches has been due to the ordinary causes, ignorant neglect and natural decay; but in the cathedral one window after another has been deliberately destroyed. In most buildings, when a window fell into decay, it was either re-leaded, rudely patched, or removed and replaced by plain glazing; and even in this last event there was a chance that it might be thrown into some obscure corner, to be re-discovered later. But at Exeter one of the cathedral glaziers, probably in the seventeenth century, devised an economical plan of using up the broken scraps of ancient glass that fell into his hands. Setting out a rude quatrefoil pattern, the sort of imitation of a grisaille window one might expect in later Jacobean times, he cut up the fourteenth-century scraps to form coloured lines and borders, filling in his background with common sheet glass (fig. 1). So enamoured were he and his successors with this stuff that, not content with using up the more decayed and broken fragments, they actually cut up perfectly sound windows, figures, canopies and grisaille backgrounds, to provide the coloured passages for their trashy glazing. During the last two centuries the work of destruction has

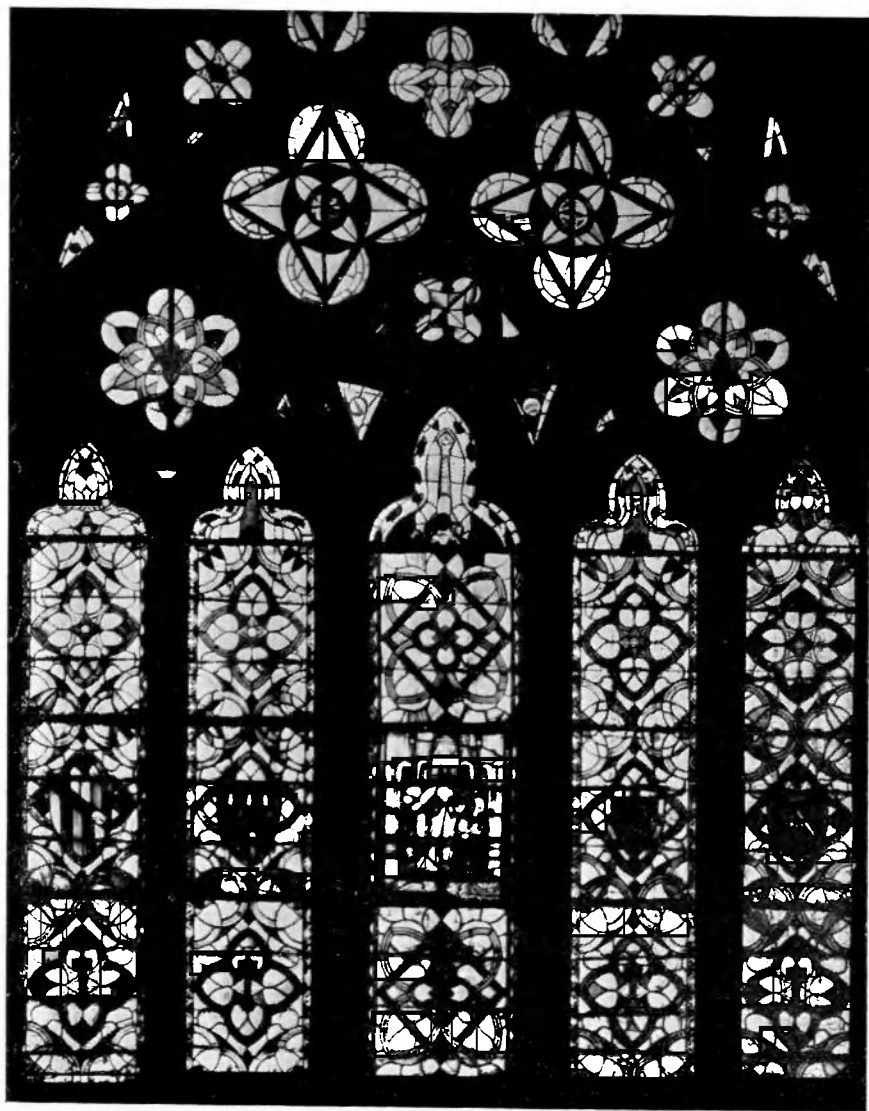
¹ There is some work by the same hand in Calverleigh church, which was removed

by the late Rev. Donald Owen from Carhaix (Finistère).

gone on without a stop, and the result is that of the glazing of the cathedral and chapter-house only four windows remain. Of these the earliest in date is the middle window of the north clerestory, facing the bishop's throne (plate 1). It is of typical early fourteenth-century glass, strongly suggestive of northern French influence. The body of the lights is good grisaille; true grisaille, in that it is painted on the green-greyish glass which, at this period, stood for white and gave the name of grisaille to this type of window. Rather high up in the lights, so as not to be hidden by the pierced stone parapet below the sill, are four figures of apostles under strongly-drawn canopies, having backgrounds partly of colour and partly of the grisaille which reappears above the canopy pinnacles. Save for two minor details the window is typical of the beginning of the fourteenth century. Its general arrangement of single figures, with canopies placed upon grisaille, is general in the north of France, especially at Rouen. Many of the details of the Exeter glass show a startling resemblance to similar work in Rouen cathedral church, and there is a tradition that one master Walter, glazier to the dean and chapter at this very period, was a Rouen man. The two minor points in which the window differs from others of its date are the border-design and the arrangement of the four lower trefoils of the tracery. The borders show unusual rounded curves that seem to hark back to an earlier period, whilst the tracery trefoils are prophetic of work fifty years later. Their rhomboidal glazing, each pane rudely painted with a separate quatrefoil, without any attempt to link them into a running pattern, forms an unusually early example of the true quarry. The heads of the figures have been smashed, probably by sixteenth-century reformers: much of the blue glass of their backgrounds has disappeared, and the shields beneath them have been removed and replaced by modern sheet glass; but, except for these defects and a jumbled piece of re-glazing at the bottom of the right-hand light, the window is in almost perfect condition.

The design of the canopies strongly resembles that of the six side lights of the east window, and possibly they are by the same hand.

The great east window of Exeter cathedral church



EXETER CATHEDRAL CHURCH. GRISAILLE WINDOW IN ST. MARY MAGDALEN'S CHAPEL.

(plate II) is an exceedingly interesting example of fourteenth-century glass. It displays at least one feature which seems to be unique in England: it offers one or two problems that so far remain unsolved, and provides a most remarkable illustration of those rapid changes in our handicraft which took place in the fourteenth century. Originally a six-light window, it was erected and glazed by bishop Bytton in the first years of the fourteenth century.¹ In 1389, after the completion of the nine-light west window, it was decided to enlarge this one, so as to accord better with its more important position. Canon Henry de Blakeborn having offered 100 marks towards the cost of the work, the chapter swore in Robert Lyen, of Exeter, as their glazier, at the yearly salary of £1 6s. 8d. Blakeborn's offer was made on 21st of April, Lyen sworn in on 28th, and on 7th May an agreement was concluded in St. Andrew's chapel between him and the chapter to glaze "the great window newly made at the head of the church behind the high altar." The fabric rolls tell the story in detail, even from the buying of the sheet of parchment on which the window was to be designed ("pro i pelle pergameni empta ad pinguendum magnam fenestram in capite ecclesie, 2d").² Lyen was to receive for each foot of new glass the sum of twenty pence; for fitting the old glass three shillings and fourpence a week, and his man two shillings. He was to find whatever might be necessary for the glazing at his own charges, but whatever quantity of new or old glass might be required for the work was to be provided by the dean and chapter.

The six lights of the original window were too short for the new openings, and bases were added in the style then in vogue, their borders, however, being made to match and run with the older glazing above them. This in itself seems rather a concession for a Gothic artist to make, though it was done at Strassburg to windows replaced after the fire which destroyed the cathedral; but it is nothing when compared with the canopies of the three

¹ "Mag[istro] Walter le Verrouer assedent[i] vitrum summi gabuli, et [viii] summarum fenestrarum, et sex fenestrarum in alis novi operis, in grosso £4 10s."

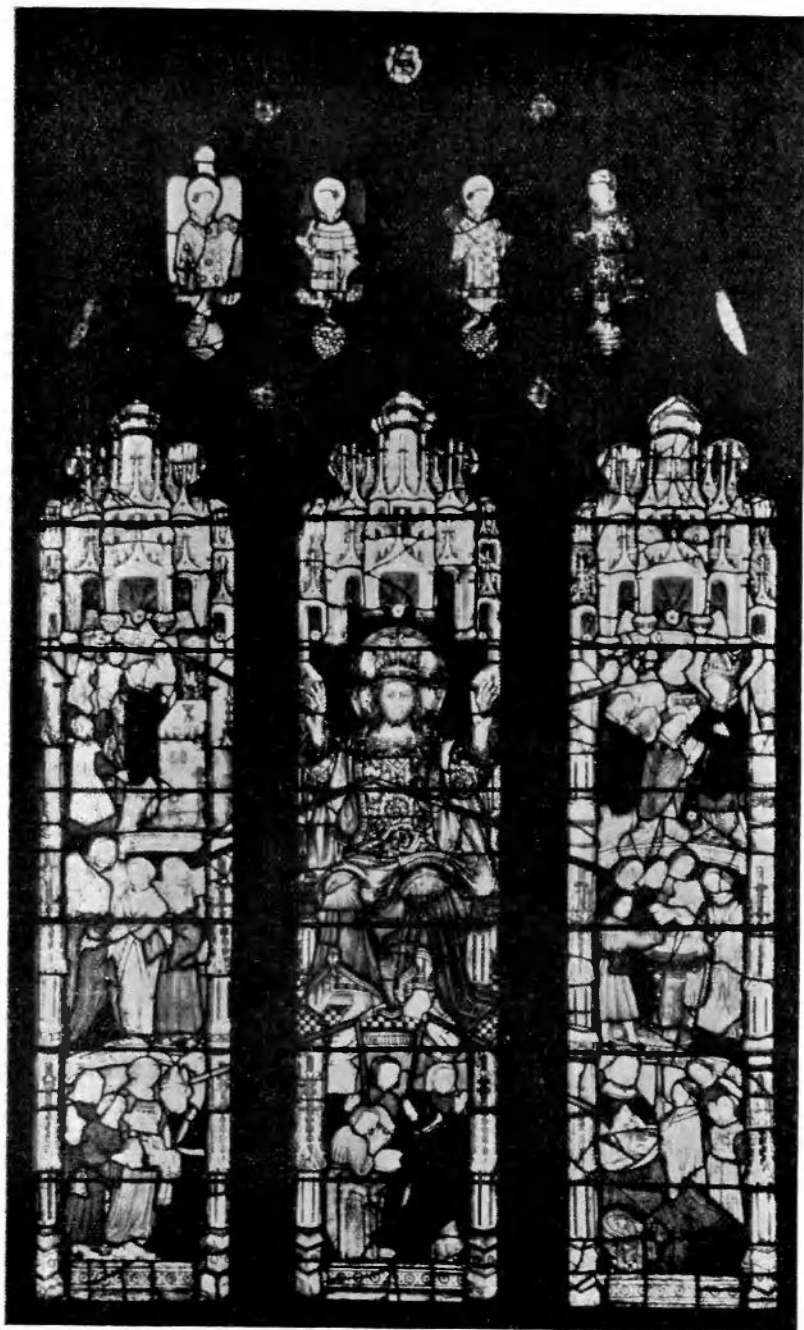
Fabric rolls, 1303-1304 (Freeman, *Exeter Cathedral*).

² Fabric rolls, 1389-1390.

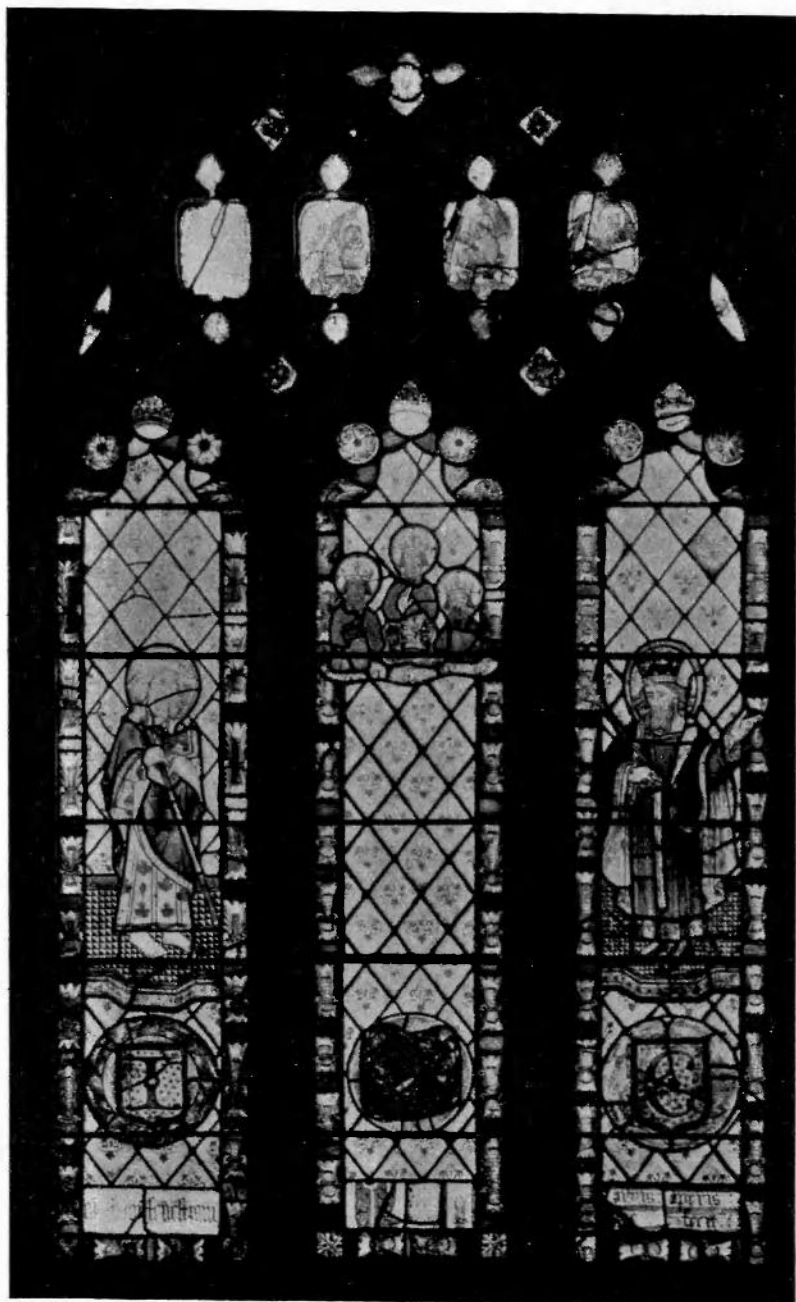
new centre lights. These are almost deliberate copies of the early fourteenth-century canopies beside them. There are minor differences, but in general appearance they are essentially of the earlier period. It is not necessary to enlarge upon this extraordinary feature: to find any Gothic glass-painter deliberately copying the work of an earlier period than his own seems to be unique.

The figures beneath these canopies are, however, typical of the end of the century, and are excellent work of that time. So are the three tracery lights immediately above them. The right-hand figure of these three, which represents St. Catherine, is an intruder, probably brought from the chapter-house at a later date. Though a female saint, she occupies an opening in the south side of the window, where all the other figures are of male saints. Besides, there was already another St. Catherine in the window, in the second lower light from the left.

This later figure is exceedingly rich in treatment, as also is the St. Barbara to the left of the middle light below. Comparison between the figure of St. Barbara and the earlier female saints to the left of the window shows, as nothing else possibly could, the strides that glass-painting had taken in the seventy years between the painting of the first six-light window in 1320 and its enlargement in 1389. The earlier figures are archaic in drawing and heavy in colour; they show no attempt at perspective, and no ornamental details beyond a crude arrangement of horizontal stripes on the under-robe of the central figure of the lower St. Catherine. The glazed and painted diaper of St. Barbara's under-robe is beautiful: so is the outer mantle of the upper St. Catherine, with its heraldic powdering of golden English leopards, a naïve attempt to represent royalty. The wheel emblem of the lower St. Catherine is in crude silhouette, scratched out from a level coat of black laid upon the only pane of white glass in the panel. The same emblem in the upper figure is drawn in perspective, painted with the utmost care, and between its spokes can be seen the rosette diaper of the background. The earlier figures are shaded only by clumsy smears of pigment, the later in a semi-translucent stipple. Most important of all, yellow stain had been discovered in the interval between the earlier and later paintings, and the



DODDISCOMBSLEIGH CHURCH. EAST WINDOW OF NORTH AISLE.



DODDISCOMBSLEIGH CHURCH. EASTERNMOST WINDOW, NORTH AISLE.

ater figures in the window are alight with it. With all these improved methods at his hand Lyen's self-restraint in copying the three middle canopies appears even more remarkable than at first sight.

The three upper middle figures are of the earlier period, and probably belonged to the earlier window. They cannot now be identified with certainty, but it seems possible that the left-hand figure represents Abraham or Joachim, that in the middle Moses, and on the right hand Isaiah. On either side of these six middle tracery openings are two larger figures, four in all. On the left are St. Sidwell and St. Helen, and on the right St. Edward the Confessor and St. Edmund. They present several puzzling features. They are not by Lyen, being much cruder, stronger work than he did, and they most certainly are later than the original six-light window. During Peckitt's restoration in 1765 their borders were removed, so that one cannot positively assert that they were painted for the openings they now occupy. But the glass from the quatrefoils above them, now in the chapter-house, was by the same hand, and most certainly was designed for this window; and yet to all appearances these figures and quatrefoils date from the middle of the century, and are explicitly transitional work, whilst the stone-work of the window obviously dates from the last quarter of the century.

All the remaining tracery openings are modern.¹ During the 1765 restoration these openings were filled with Georgian glass by Peckitt, consisting principally of leaded Greek frets in common sheet glass of many colours, so debased that no one could take exception to their removal.

The three figures in the lower middle tracery openings are St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and the later St. Catherine. Those in the lower lights, from left to right, are St. Margaret, the earlier St. Catherine, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Barbara, our Lady and the Child, St. Martin of Tours, St. Peter, St. Paul and St. Andrew. The shields of arms below them in the same order are those of bishop Stafford

¹ Made by Mr. Frederick Drake.

(1395-1419), bishop Blondy (1245-1257), bishop Chichester (1138-1155), bishop Osbern (1072-1103), Edward the Confessor, archbishop William Courtenay (1381-1396) (a shield formerly in one of the large tracery quatrefoils), bishop Berkeley (1327), France and England, quarterly, and a plain shield with the Courtenay arms.¹

Then come the traditional arms of Athelstan and bishop Leofric (1050-1072), bishops Warelwast (William, 1107-1137 and Robert, 1155-1160), bishop Brewer (1224-1244), bishop Stapeldon (1308-1326) and bishop Nevill (1458-1464). Bishop Nevill's shield is certainly, and the large Courtenay shield possibly, later than the other shields in the window.

The only other windows remaining in anything approaching a complete condition are the two grisailles in the chapels of St. Mary Magdalen and St. Gabriel (plate III). Originally occupying the six-light openings to the north and south of these chapels, each has been cut down and crammed into the five-light east window adjoining it. That in St. Gabriel's chapel was restored by Mr. Frederick Drake and replaced in its original position.

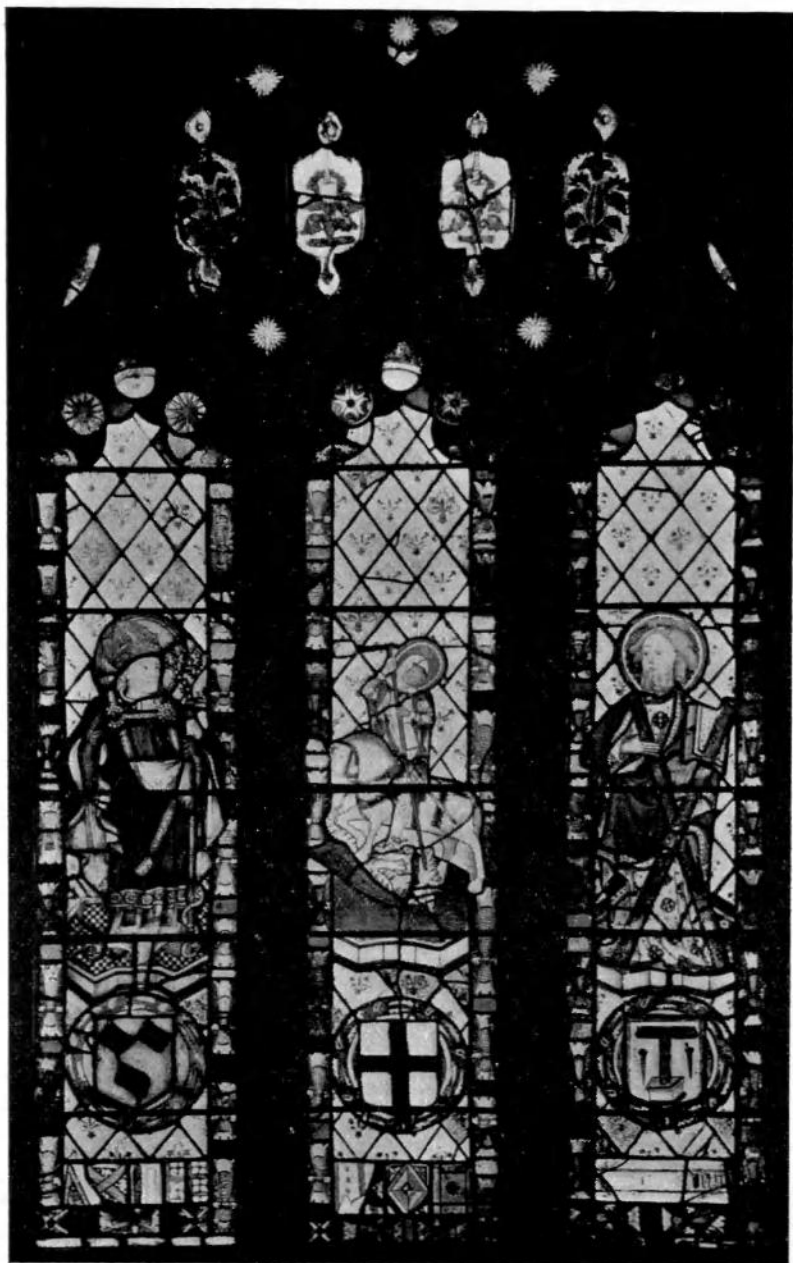
These windows are remarkable not only for the delicacy of their design and the adroitness of their execution, but also for the hardness and whiteness of their material. In 1317 the chapter purchased a large quantity of both white and coloured glass,² and it may be that these windows formed part of this purchase. The white glass of these windows is exceptional. For a wonder, it is nearly pure white, instead of being green or grey or horn-coloured, as is most of the so-called white glass of the period. Besides its purity of colour it is a most durable material, and now, after six centuries of exposure to our changeable climate, shows scarcely any traces of decay.

The windows throughout both aisles of the quire were once glazed with the same material, and some very similar glass was used in the first east window. The quire

¹ Dr. Oliver ascribes this shield to bishop Peter Courtenay (1478-1487), but it should be noted that his episcopate commenced 89 or 90 years after the window was enlarged, whereas William Courtenay was archbishop

of Canterbury at the period the work was in hand (1381-1396).

² Freeman, p. 128: "In 629 peys de albo vitro empt[is] apud Rotomagensm (sic) £15 4s. 9d pro pede 6d. Item in 203 peys de colore £10 3s, pro pede 13d."



DODDISCOMBSLEIGH CHURCH. NORTH AISLE, SECOND WINDOW FROM EAST END.

windows were also grisailles, only different from these two windows of the end chapels in that their painted details were of naturalistic foliage instead of the earlier delicate and highly conventionalised trefoil pattern. Some of the tracery openings of these aisle windows remain complete and *in situ*, but the lights have been destroyed to form the wretched modern quatrefoil glazing.

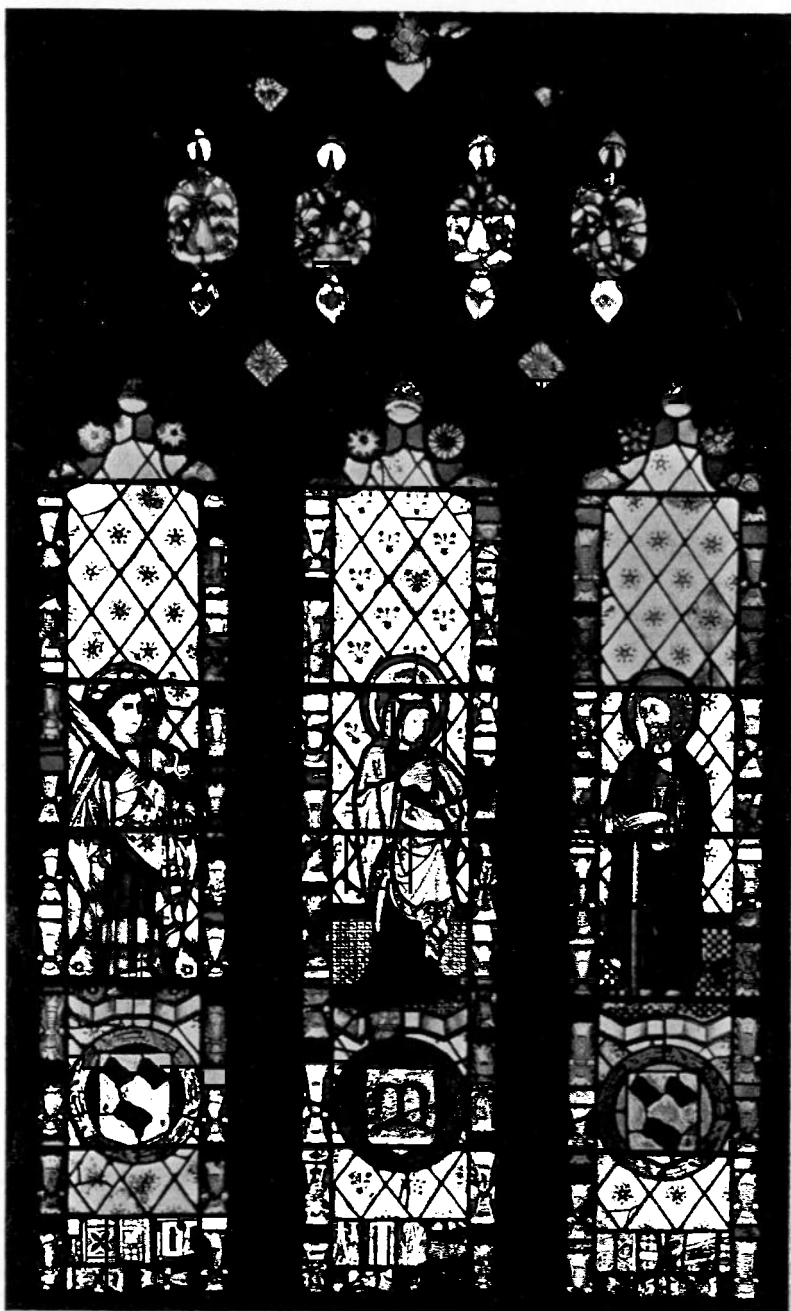
The design of these two remaining windows is purely geometrical, quatrefoils and strapwork. In the centre of each middle panel is a shield of arms, and every panel below them has a pair of keys, emblems of our patron, St. Peter. The shields in the St. Mary Magdalen's chapel are those of bishop Grandisson, Fitzalan quartering Warrenne, bishop Stafford, and Courtenay impaling Bohun. In St. Gabriel's chapel are the arms of Northwode, Northwode impaling Grandisson, Montacute, Montacute impaling Grandisson, Courtenay, and Courtenay impaling Bryan. These shields were amongst the first listed by Richard Symonds in 1644, and it is remarkable that in face of the destruction elsewhere this series should remain intact.

Heraldic and other additions to a grisaille window may nearly always be regarded as evidences of late work, late for grisaille, that is. These windows are in all probability earlier than 1330, but the insertion of keys and shields suggests that the glass-painter was already tiring of purely ornamental patterns. The windows, however, show no other trace of weariness or decadence. They are beautifully and delicately executed, and there is no lack of strength in the slender curves of their conventional design. The lead lines follow the radiating stems most cunningly, the stems themselves finishing in a tiny trefoil at each joint. The quatrefoils fill harmoniously the space allotted to them, and despite their delicacy there is a firmness about these windows that puts them in a class apart. The Five Sisters at York are good, but there is too much of them: they become wearisome, and their patterns, though richer and more intricate than ours at Exeter, lack harmonious spacing and are overcrowded; and though the designs vary in each light, they none the less tend to become monotonous. The work at Salisbury and Amesbury is powerful and skilled, yet it, too, holds more than a sug-

gestion of monotony, and a certain heaviness as well, whilst the naturalistic designs at Lincoln are loose and slovenly compared with the trim neatness and restraint at Exeter. Had the York and Salisbury grisailles been painted on hard white glass instead of their own exquisite, faulty greys and greens, which is the true material for grisailles, they would probably have been deprived of half their beauty; but these Exeter windows hold their own, and are harmonious and interesting, even though painted on a glass which at times is positively harsh by reason of its excessive purity.

Besides these four windows and the scraps leaded up in the modern quatrefoils throughout the building there is an interesting jumble of odds and ends in the east window of the chapter-house. For the most part heraldic work of various dates from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, it comprises all that has been saved from the destruction of the last three centuries. Some few of the coats of arms are of special interest, amongst them being several royal shields, England and France, variously differenced by bordures and labels. There is also a quartered coat of Bohemia executed by the mysterious hand that worked upon the east window, and a couple of little kneeling votive figures, one of which in all probability once belonged to the later figure of St. Catherine in the east window. Another similar figure occupies the centre of the grisaille window in St. Mary Magdalen's chapel, and these three, together with Lyen's six figures in the east window and a few scattered shields, comprise all the remains of Perpendicular glass throughout the building.

The five windows which fill the north aisle of Doddiscombsleigh church are all of the fifteenth century. That at the east end is of exceptional interest (plate iv). Three panels on either side and one at the base of the centre light display the seven Sacraments, and from the wounds on hands, feet, and side of a modern central figure of our Lord red streams flow to each Sacrament. A similar *naïveté* of treatment occurs in the centre light of the adjoining window (plate v), where the faces of a grotesque little Trinity are stained bright yellow, perhaps in the attempt to represent a glory as of sunlight. This little



DODDISCOMBSLEIGH CHURCH. NORTH AISLE, THIRD WINDOW FROM EAST END.

group was originally higher up, in the head of the light, and apparently formed part of a larger subject, possibly the crowning of our Lady.

The figure of St. James in this window has an under-robe diapered with a pattern of shells, amongst them, curiously enough, being one univalve. The figure of St. Edward the Confessor is modern. In the tracery are the emblems of the four evangelists.

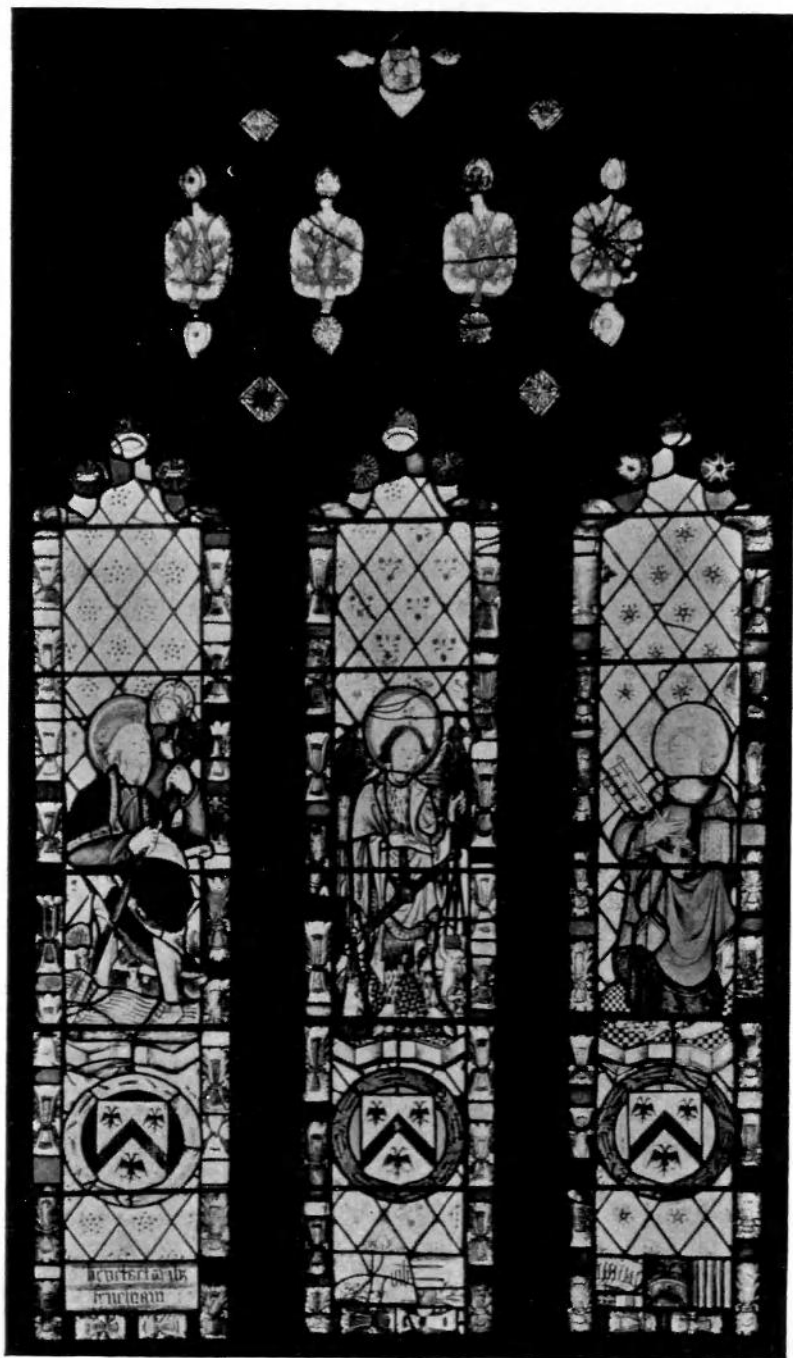
The borders are of a design very common at the period, but none the less puzzling. They appear to be leafy bundles tied at the centre, and possibly may represent a very distorted fleur-de-lys. Mr. W. H. St. John Hope pronounces this to be a crude and elementary form of the "water-flower." The quarry design is most certainly a fleur-de-lys, and in this form is very common throughout the west and south of England.

The next window westwards (plate vi) has ancient figures of St. George and St. Andrew, to which has been added a modern St. Patrick. The arms below this last figure are those of the Chudleighs, to which family belong the fine heraldic series in the adjoining parish of Ashton. The tracery openings of this and the next two windows are very unusual in design (plate vii). In this window also there is one modern figure, that of St. John. The others are of our Lady and St. Paul, and in the base of each side-light the arms of Chudleigh again occur. The attitude of St. Paul is unusual. He holds his right hand over one half of his face, the finger-tips concealing his right eye. This may perhaps have reference to the story of his conversion.

The last window of the series (plate viii) is in the best state of preservation. The figures are those of St. Christopher, the archangel Michael and St. Peter. The little devil in the centre light, trying to pull down one end of the scales in which a soul is being weighed, illustrates admirably that quaint grotesqueness which gives to fourteenth-century work its greatest interest and charm. The three shields in the bases have been ascribed to the Doddescombs. If they really are intended for the Doddescomb arms they are strangely incorrect for work of such good character. They bear silver, a chevron between three double-eagles sable, beaked and legged gold,

whereas the Doddescomb arms are purpure, three eagles displayed silver.

These nine windows in two buildings comprise all the complete or nearly complete examples of ancient glass in the district. There are a few shields in Exeter churches : five in St. Martin's, two or three in St. Edmund's, and a small Jacobean heraldic medallion in a window behind Messrs. Pearse's drapery shop in Fore street. Of the churches the Institute is visiting this year, five have some remains : Kenn, Kenton, St. Saviour's Dartmouth, Berry Pomeroy, and two interesting lights in the north chancel window at Little Hempston. These last were brought in 1863 from Marlton, where they were found in a rubbish-heap in the belfry, a statement which alone gives a fairly good reason for the deficiency of complete windows in the district.



DODDISCOMBSLEIGH CHURCH. · WESTERNMOST WINDOW OF NORTH AISLE.