

On an Interior Window of Chesterfield Church.

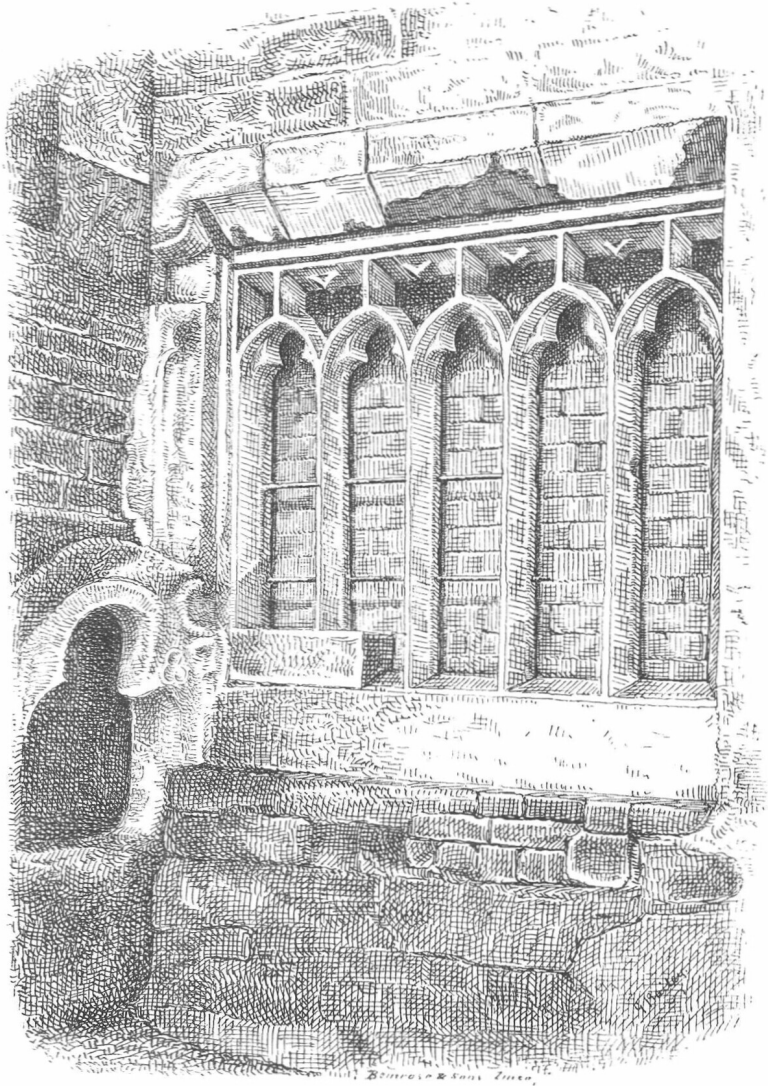
(Disclosed August, 1885.)

BY REV. J. CHARLES COX, LL.D.

LAST August (1885) an interesting discovery was made in the parish church of Chesterfield. Mr. John T. Windle, one of the churchwardens, was good enough to promptly write upon the subject, and to furnish an excellent photograph, from which the engraving on Plate XI. is copied. Mr. Windle has since most kindly supplied further information, and also a ground plan of the eastern division of this large church.

Workmen were engaged in pulling down the heating apparatus in a chapel to the east of the north transept, which had been placed there, we believe, during the restoration of 1843, when, at the back of the base of the chimney, a piscina niche in fair preservation was disclosed.* This piscina niche, which is fixed in the south side of the east wall that separates this chapel from the modern lean-to vestry, is shown on the plate. Upon removing some more of the bricks, an opening to the right was made, which upon enlargement exposed to view a window-like construction in the south wall, that has originally communicated

* Mr. Windle tells us that, the piscina having been revealed in the absence of anyone in authority, a workman had carefully built it up again with bricks. Upon ordering these bricks to be removed, Mr. Windle was assured, in a deprecating tone, "It is only an owd water-trough, sir; I've seen 'em before in owd churches."



INTERIOR WINDOW OF NORTH TRANSEPT CHAPEL, CHESTERFIELD.
(Disclosed August, 1885.)

with the north aisle of the chancel. The chancel side of the window is walled up and plastered over, a mural monument being fixed in the plaster close to the back of the window. The first name upon this monument is that of Henry, son of the Rev. John Bourne, of Spital, who died in 1777; and the last name is Anna Catherina, second wife of the said John Bourne, and daughter of the Rev. Samuel Pegge, of Whittington, LL.D., who died in 1816. Another monument, about five feet to the east of this, is of the year 1782; and another close by on the west side is of the year 1771. We take it, therefore, that this opening was walled up somewhat over a century ago, in order to give space for further mural monuments.

The size of the window is just about five feet square, the base being four feet from the floor of the chapel. The stonework is covered with several coats of whitewash, a further proof of its comparatively modern concealment. Iron stanchions are let into the sides of the mullions, two to each light; but of these the two belonging to the west light, and one belonging to the adjoining one, are now absent. The mullions have no glass grooves, a fact that is sufficient in itself, independently of its position, to show that this opening could never have been of the nature of an exterior window.

There seems to be no doubt that we have here a squint, or hagnoscope, of most unusually large size. Through this opening the majority of worshippers in the chapel would be able to plainly see the high altar, and to watch the Mass, looking across the north choir aisle.

Large squints of several lights are found, but very occasionally. There is one, as Mr. Micklethwaite, the well-known architect, tells us, of this character from a "closet" in the chapel at Sudley Castle. There is also another in the church of Burford, Oxfordshire, which gives the clue to the true interpretation of the Chesterfield example. The squint at Burford is a long window in the east wall of the south transept, where the mayor and corporation have for a considerable period sat. It gives a full view of the high altar, through a chapel which forms the south aisle of

the chancel. The corporation at Burford are the lineal descendants of an old guild (as is not unfrequently the case), and this transept was formerly their chapel, used as a pew for public services, and having its own altar for the guild services.

At Chesterfield there were several guilds. The oldest and most important was that of the Blessed Virgin, whose chapel was the Lady Chapel in the south choir aisle. But the Guild of the Holy Cross, with its numerous brethren, was also a well-founded body, with many influential supporters. This latter was founded on the north side of the parish church of All Saints; and we have no doubt that its chapel is the one to the east of the north transept, from which the heating apparatus has recently been removed. Here would be the altar of the Holy Cross for the celebrations of their own chaplain, and here would be the pew or official seat for "the Brethren of the Guild of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Cross, in the north of the church of All Saints, Chesterfield" (as they are described in a patent of Henry VI.), to occupy during parochial functions, with a full view, across St. Catharine's choir, of the high altar.*

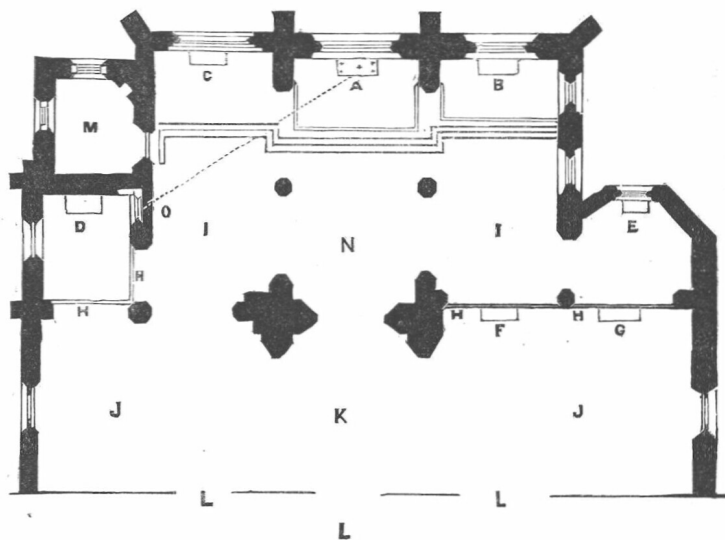
The piscina niche, and the east wall in which it is placed (Plate XI.), are of Decorated date, and of the first half of the fourteenth century; but the piece of south walling pierced with this five-light squint is a later addition, and of Perpendicular design.

On September 25th, 1393, the royal license was granted to William de Horbury (clerk), to Richard Porter (vicar of Chesterfield), and to various laymen of note in the locality, to found the Guild of the Holy Cross. This chapel, to the east of the north transept, already possessing the altar of the Holy Cross, was then, it would seem (or soon afterwards), rendered more private and suitable for guild purposes by the building out of this wall, which was then pierced with five lights for the double purpose of giving full sight of the high altar, and of rendering borrowed light to the somewhat dark choir-aisle of St. Catharine. The rest of the area

* See the account of Chesterfield church in vol. i. of *Churches of Derbyshire*; also Mr. Pym Yeatman's *Records of the Borough of Chesterfield*.

of the guild chapel was most likely inclosed with screen work, as it now is, though the screens now there are parts of the old rood screen at the east end of the nave, which were removed to this chapel in 1845.

The following sketch ground-plan of the east end of Chesterfield church will readily enable anyone to see how, through this squint-window, the occupants of the chapel of the Holy Cross could command a view of the high altar. On this plan the position of the old altars are marked, and their dedications identified, the only one that is in the least doubtful being that of St. George, in what is now termed the Calton Chapel, and which is used as a baptistry.



REFERENCES TO PLAN.

- A. High altar.
 B. Altar of B. V. Mary (Guild Chapel).
 C. Altar of St. Catharine.
 D. Altar of Holy Cross (Guild Chapel).
 E. Altar of St. George.
 F. „ of St. Michael (Chantry).
 G. „ of St. Mary Magdalene (Chantry).

- H. H. H. H. Screens.
 I. I. Chancel Aisles.
 J. J. Transepts.
 K. Tower.
 L. L. L. Nave, and Nave aisles.
 M. Modern vestry.
 N. Chancel.
 O. Squint-window.