

THE LOW SIDE WINDOWS OF SUSSEX CHURCHES.

BY PHILIP MAINWARING JOHNSTON.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact that, with all the flood of light cast upon the archæology of our town and village churches during the last sixty years, no satisfactory explanation has yet been agreed upon as to the original intention and use of low side windows, commonly called leper windows, or lychscopes, by the favourers of certain theories. So far, indeed, as a general consensus of opinion upon any one of the numerous theories that have been advanced is concerned, the low side window is as much a *vexata quæstio* as it was fifty years ago, when the late J. H. Parker contributed to "The Archæological Journal" an admirably written and illustrated article on the subject. This article, in which Mr. Parker reviewed impartially no less than twelve then prevalent theories, represents, so far as I am aware, the one really solid contribution to the literature upon the low side window controversy, and is the high water mark of our knowledge. The old facts and theories, it is true, have been re-presented from time to time, as fresh examples have been discovered, in one or another of the publications devoted to general or local archæology;¹ but archæologists still seem hopelessly hazy and divided in opinion as to the origin of this peculiar opening. The Kent Society's volumes contain, besides a few casual references to examples in that county, a solitary paper upon one of exceptional interest.² Further particulars

¹ "The Archæological Journal," Vol. XLVI., p. 151; "The Gentleman's Magazine," 1844 and 1846; "The Reliquary," Vol. XXIV., "Mediæval Confessionals," by J. L. André, Esq.; "The Antiquary," Vol. XXI., pp. 122 and 217.

² "Archæologia Cantiana," Vol. IX., p. 236.

are to be scantily gleaned from the "Surrey Archæological Collections."³

But what of "Sleepy Sussex?" I have searched in vain the indices of our Society's forty volumes; the low side window, whether under that name or others, is not so much as mentioned.⁴ And this is not by any means for want of examples. As a county, I should say that Sussex is singularly rich in these peculiar openings, and, moreover, affords a wide range in point of date and form. With very limited opportunities of search, I have noted the existence of low side windows in thirty-six churches, situated in all parts of the county, and, doubtless, a systematic examination would greatly add to that number.

It is not my own opinion only that the surest way of settling the origin and purpose of the low side window is for those who have leisure and opportunity to collect and classify, county by county, all the existing examples. To do this is a very great task, demanding considerable patience and expenditure of time, but the end that seems unattainable to one, or even to a number working disconnectedly, could be greatly simplified and expedited were the many interested in our ancient churches to combine in this work. May I then appeal to, and beyond, the circle of our members—to residents in Sussex and to all interested in her antiquities—to send a description, and, if possible, a sketch, measurements, or photograph, or, if none of these, at least the bare fact of the existence of such openings in any Sussex churches that have come under their notice? If sent to the Editor of these "Collections," such particulars would, I doubt not, be gladly acknowledged and made use of; and if sent to me the instances noted would, if possible, be visited, that some record might be obtained for our Society of their date and character.

By this means we should have done our part as a county society in the settling of a vexed controversy;

³ *e.g.*, Vol. XII., "Compton Church."

⁴ This is true as regards the *indices*, but a painstaking search through our "Collections" reveals the mention in Vol. XXXVIII. of a leper window at Arlington, as to which see *post*.

but whether the end were attained or not, much light would of necessity be cast upon a dark subject, and interesting and valuable facts recorded.

Thus much by way of preface and apology before proceeding to the subject of my paper.

And first, for the benefit of the less informed, I may be allowed to quote the late M. H. Bloxam's description of the characteristics of the low side window: "The peculiar low side window, common in some districts, especially in churches erected in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is generally found in the south wall of the chancel, near the south-west angle, but sometimes on the opposite side and occasionally even in one of the aisles, at no great distance from the ground and frequently immediately beneath a large window. These low side windows, or the lower portions of them, we commonly find closed up with masonry; and, on examination, they appear not to have been glazed, but externally covered with an iron grating, with a wooden shutter, opening inwardly, the hinges of which are frequently left imbedded in the masonry, though the wooden shutters seldom remain."⁵

To this description it is only necessary to add that *two* of these openings in the same church are by no means uncommon, one on each side of the chancel, close to its western end. I know of nine or ten churches in Sussex alone where this is the case. There are, so far as I am aware, only two instances in the county of these openings being found *outside* the chancel—both of later date (1400 to 1500) than the great bulk of extant specimens. One is to be found in the west wall of the south aisle of Buxted Church; the other (as to which my recollection is somewhat uncertain) in the middle part of the north wall of the north aisle of St. Clement's, Hastings.

The following is an attempt at a list of Sussex churches containing low side windows. The figure 2 against certain names indicates that there are *two* of these

⁵ "Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture," M. H. Bloxam, Eleventh Edition, Vol. II., p. 127.

openings in those churches. The order in which the names are placed is from west to east of the county :

WEST SUSSEX.

Appledram (2).	Rustington.
Slindon (2).	Clapham (2).
Yapton.	Lancing (2).
Binstead.	Coombes.
Clymping (2).	Botolph's (2).
Ford.	Edburton (2).
North Stoke (2).	Kingston.
Burpham.	

EAST SUSSEX.

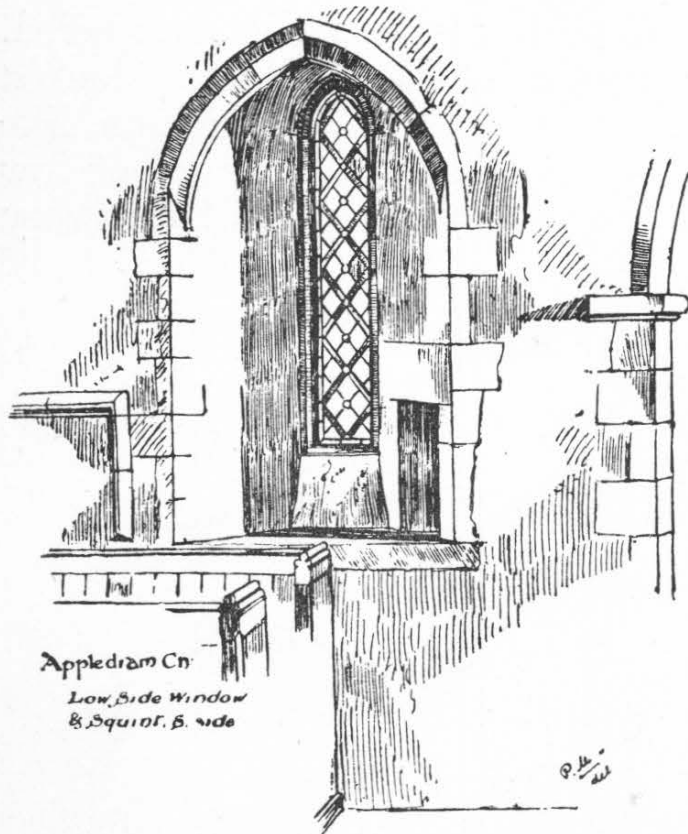
Bolney.	Friston.
Hangleton.	East Dean.
Patcham.	Wilmington.
Ovingdean.	Arlington.
Street.	Hellingly.
Worth.	Warbleton.
Isfield.	Burwash.
Buxted.	Watlington.
Tarring Neville.	Bodiam.
Alciston.	Hastings, St. Clement's.
Alfriston (2).	

With some exceptions I have visited these churches and taken particulars of the low side windows. My authorities for the exceptions are chiefly Hussey's "Churches of Kent, Sussex and Surrey," and our esteemed contributor, Mr. J. L. André, F.S.A., to whom my best thanks are due for information most kindly given. A brief description of these examples, personally inspected and otherwise, may be now attempted.

West Sussex.

APPLEDRAM.—This church, like many another, merits a detailed account in these "Collections." It is a gem of Early English Architecture, of a date about the middle of the thirteenth century, and consists of chancel and nave under one roof, with no division internally, and a lean-to south aisle. The chancel has in its three walls triplets of beautifully proportioned lancets, chamfered and rebated on outside, and finished on inside with shafts and rich suites of mouldings. The great resemblance which these bear to the Early English work of Bosham

—to which Appledram was anciently attached—suggests that the same architect had to do with both churches.



Appledram Ch.
Low Side Window
& Squint. S. side

Little more than a glance is needed to note the fact that the two low side windows are later insertions, not perhaps later by more than a few years, but obviously a disturbance of the original plan. They are plain lancet-shaped openings, exact duplicates of each other, except in one particular, and differ from the windows proper of the chancel in being set much nearer the

ground and internally having no mouldings. Unlike these windows, they have a rebate internally for a shutter. The present glazing is quite modern. The outside sills are about 2-ft. from the present ground level and the *internal* sills (which are flat and about 3-ft. from the floor) are 15-in. lower than the glass line. On the level of this internal sill, in the southern of the two windows, is a squint or hagioscope, pierced through its western splayed jamb, and thus giving anyone standing in the eastern part of the aisle communication, whether by sight or speech, with the chancel. This is the only example known to me in Sussex of a combination of low side window and hagioscope. Hampshire furnishes another instance, which I have recently measured and photographed, and Wiltshire a third, but such a union of two distinct features is very rarely found.

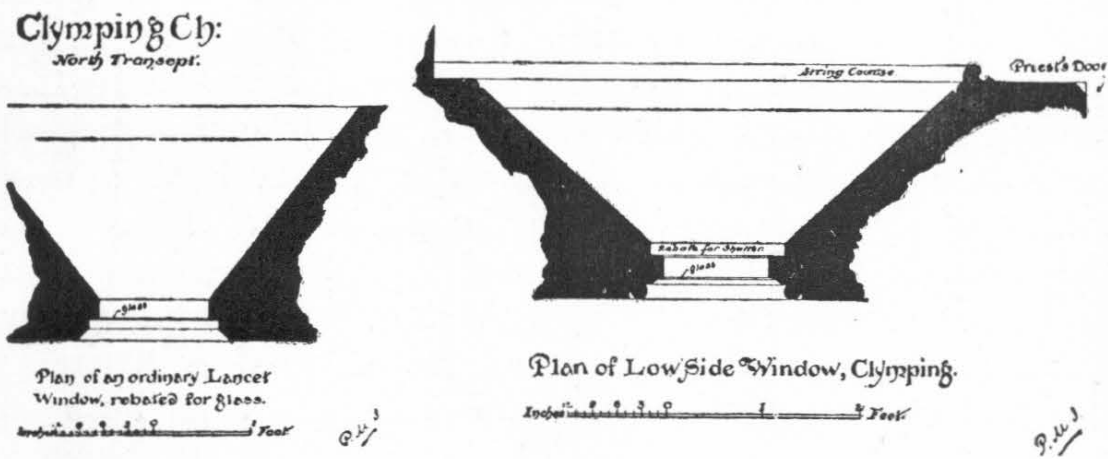
SLINDON.—Here again the low side window is duplicated; and again they are insertions in older walls, as will

be seen by reference to Mr. T. G. Jackson's account and plan of this church in Vol. XIX. of these "Collections." Late in the thirteenth century, as Mr. Jackson shows, the Trans-Norman "chancel was entirely remodelled. The earlier lancet windows in the side walls were blocked and larger lancet windows inserted." Mr. Jackson, like the rest of our contributors, ignores the brace of low side windows here, although they are part of this very



remodelling of the chancel of which he is writing. They are exactly the same in shape and situation, close adjoining the chancel arch on either side. One of the narrow early lancets mentioned, on the south side, was *blocked up* when the low side window, close by, was opened. This fact seems to prove the latter to have been inserted

for some other purpose than that of giving light. But, whatever that purpose may have been, these openings in this instance depart from the general rule in that, although set much lower down in the wall than the windows proper of both dates, they are still raised much higher from the floor and ground levels than is usually the case, the outer sills being some 6-ft. from the ground and 5-ft. from the present floor level of the chancel. The openings are plain broad lancets, rather squat in proportion to their width and set with a wide internal splay, which is finished at top with a segmental arch in one flat curve—locally a sign of the latest phase of Early English or of Decorated work. The rebate for the shutter is here on the *outside* of the opening, *not* the usual position. In this connection it is well to note that the lancet windows in Sussex thirteenth century work (as well as in Surrey and elsewhere) are very commonly rebated on the outside, instead of being *grooved*, to hold the glazing—possibly also in



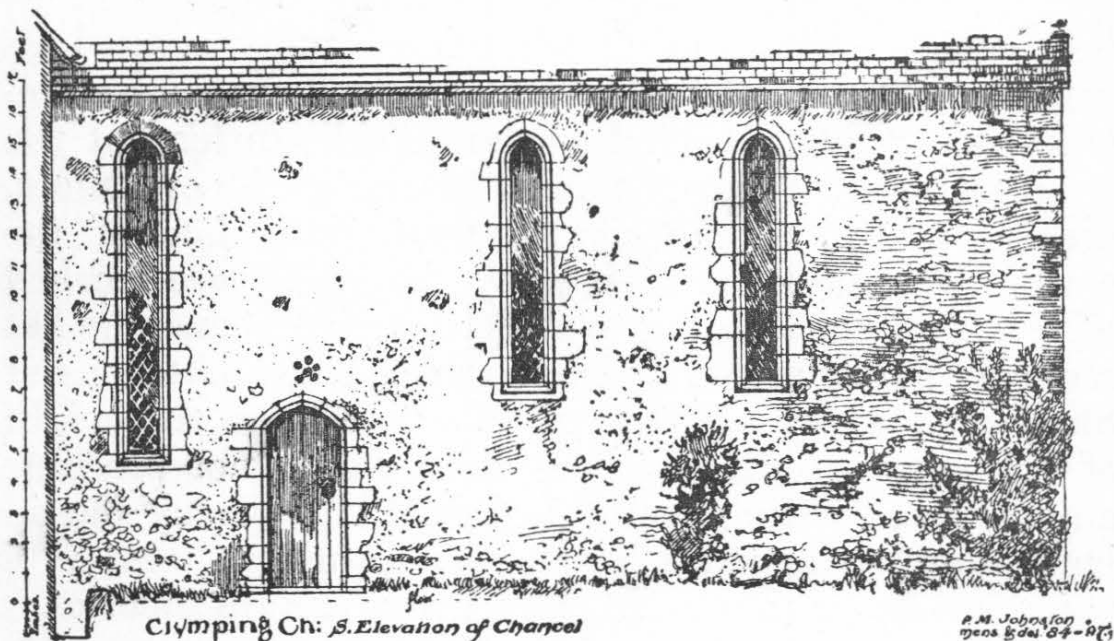
some cases in those days when glass was still not commonly used, for the attachment of shutters. These narrow openings must then have been wind-doors with a vengeance. But that glazing and shutters were sometimes both used in ordinary window openings is proved by the chancel windows of Clymping, where the glazing is against the outside rebate; and in the inside rebate some of the hooks for the shutter hinges still remain. (See accompanying illustration.)

YAPTON.—The nave, aisles and tower of this church appear to have been built progressively between 1180 and 1210. They furnish a very complete and interesting example of Transitional Norman, some of the carving and other details being especially noteworthy. In addition, a remarkable eleventh century font (by some thought to be of pre-Conquest date) and a picturesque timber porch make the church well worth visiting. The chancel is Early English in style, and, with the body of the church, probably succeeds an earlier erection of Saxon or Norman date. Its priest's door, two of the lancet windows in the south wall and one in the north have been blocked, leaving the westernmost still open on either side. Both are fairly low down in the wall, but they differ in date, that on the north belonging apparently to about 1210, although its original narrow external opening has been widened at some later period. The southern window closely adjoins the elegant Early English chancel arch, and like it is of mid-thirteenth century date. Its sill is partly flat internally, as in the Ford example and elsewhere, but the external lancet opening appears not to be in its original condition, so that the evidence for including this among Sussex low side windows is not complete; at present no trace of a rebate for the shutter is visible in either of these windows. The chancel and the rest of the church would greatly gain by an *archæological* restoration, which would bring out ancient features now hidden and do away with incongruous modern fittings; the real character of these windows could then be seen more clearly.

BINSTED.—This tiny church, with its Norman windows and unique contemporary painting upon one of them, and many other details of interest, deserves more notice than it has yet received. In the south wall of the chancel, near to its western end (there is no chancel arch), is a plain lancet opening, 12-in. wide, much restored, which *may* have been a low side window. Its date would appear to be about 1250. The internal sill is flat, but there is no rebate in the external stonework, the sill

of which is about 4-ft. from the ground. This and the Yapton windows must be considered as doubtful examples.

CLYMPING.—Here is another most undeservedly neglected church—one of the most beautiful and interesting in Sussex and the South of England, yet practically ignored by our Society; never included in any of its annual or occasional visits; never described or illustrated in these pages. It deserves a careful monograph with drawings to scale—a want which I hope I may before long be permitted to supply. I will only, therefore, now say that to the trans-Norman tower (standing to the south of the south transept) was added, about the middle of the thirteenth century, a cross

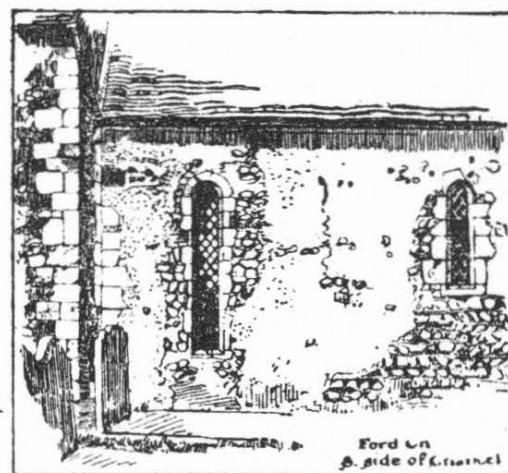
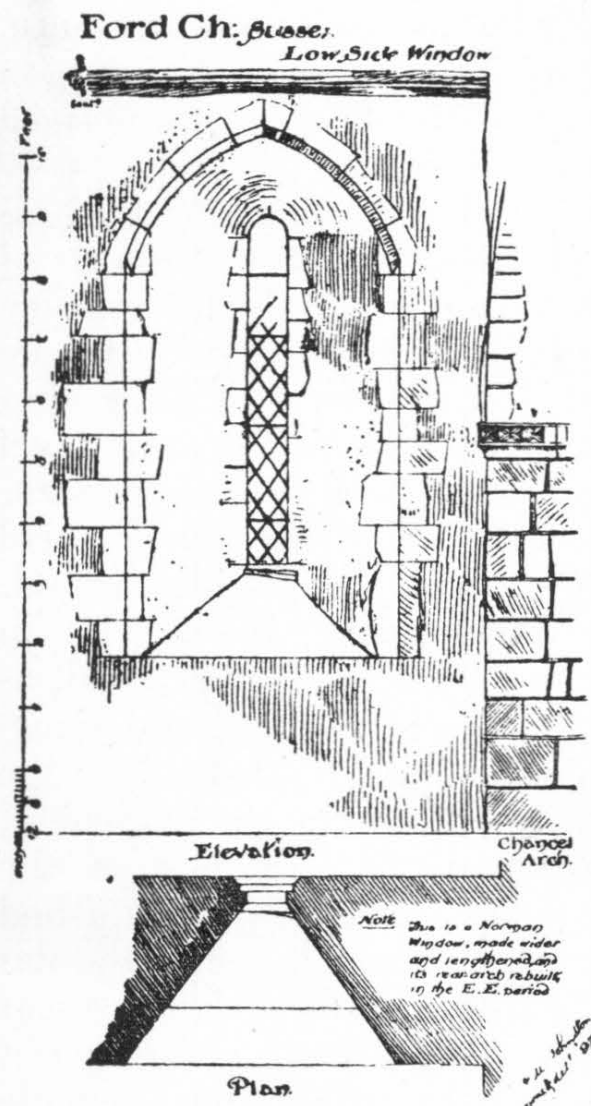


church, with a nave south aisle, in the perfection of chastely beautiful Early English. From the classic simplicity of the detail it might be inferred that the church belonged to the first half of the thirteenth century. A minute examination of its features, coupled with such scanty documentary evidence (if such it can be called) as exists, leads me, however, to place the date of its rebuilding at a date between 1250-1265—a period

nearly covered by the episcopate of John de Clymping, a native of this parish, who probably had a hand in the work. His work in Chichester Cathedral displays a striking similarity to parts of Clymping Church, although, of course, much richer. The low side windows, one on either side of the western end of the chancel, are noticed by Brandon in his "Parish Churches," where a (very incorrect) plan and interior view are given of this church. The peculiarity of these examples, as also of those at North Stoke and Clapham, and the solitary specimen at Ford, is that they are simply ordinary lancet windows lengthened downwards. At Clymping the low side windows have their heads on the same level with the two other lancets in each wall, but their outer sills are 2-ft. lower, being 5-ft. 5-in. from the chancel floor level and about 4-ft. 9-in. from the outside ground. They are extraordinarily lofty, being 10-ft. $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. in height at the glass plane, 1-ft. wide, doubly rebated, as before noted, like the other chancel windows, and somewhat elaborately moulded on the outside, instead of the usual chamfer. This I take to be one of the evidences, architecturally, of the comparatively late date of the work. The angles of their splays internally are finished with a beaded moulding, which is carried round the flat segmental rear arches. The form of these latter, as at Slindon, is a sign of lateness. In both cases the height of the *external* sill from the floor would not preclude anyone from sitting on the internal sill—partly flat in both—and so approaching to the opening. This is a point important to note in considering certain theories.

FORD.—The low side window here is in the usual place—the south side of the chancel, close to the chancel arch. Ford Church is an extremely ancient building; and within the limits of its tiny nave, chancel and south porch is a specimen of every style, from Saxon or Early Norman down to Carolean. Beneath its luxuriant accumulation of whitewash are hints of ancient colour decoration, which our Society might do well to watch over, remembering the irreparable loss this county has

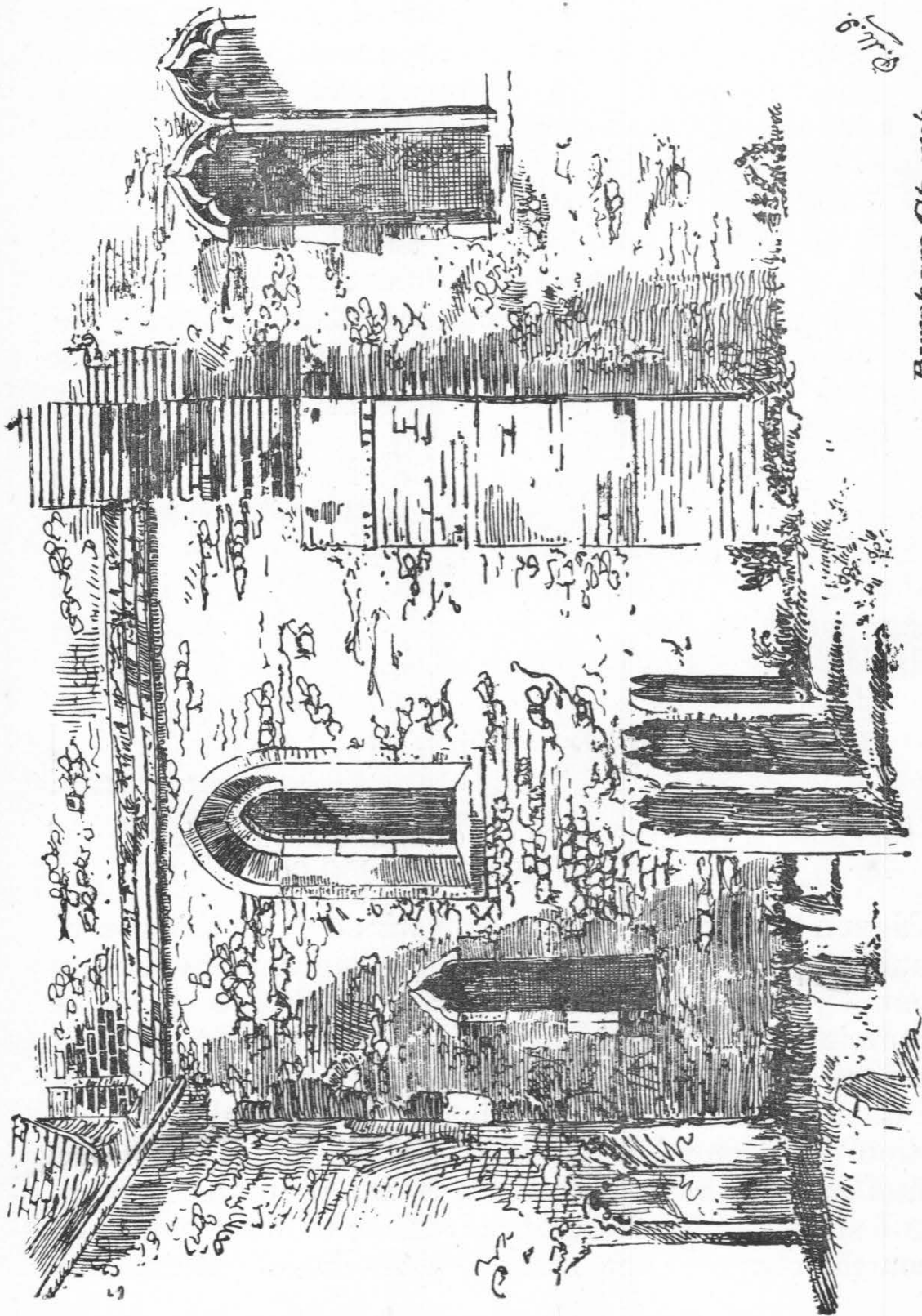
already sustained in the destruction, from ignorance or carelessness, of such ancient paintings. The low side window is a plain narrow lancet, $7\frac{1}{2}$ -in. wide and 5-ft. 8-in. high, rebated on outside, and with a slightly pointed head. The ground has risen considerably, owing to interments, so that it is now only a little over 2-ft. below the sill. This latter is raised 1-ft. $6\frac{1}{2}$ -in. above the flat part of the internal sill, which is less than 3-ft. from the chancel floor. The date



of this lancet, judging from its double chamfered, pointed rear arch, would seem to be about 1250-60.

NORTH STOKE.—The low side windows at this church would appear to be of about the same date as the last example, possibly rather later. They are like the Clymping examples in being the westernmost of three lancets. Unlike all those previously quoted, which are of Caen stone, the windows here are externally of local yellow sandstone, internally of hard chalk. My sketches, taken in 1888, were not accompanied by measurements, but I should judge the internal sills to be about 5-ft. 6-in. from the chancel floor, and the glass line of external sills

about 3-ft. 6-in. from the present ground level. This church possesses a curious Early English chancel arch in chalk, and two very interesting examples of Early Decorated window tracery, which, like the lancets, are in sandstone.



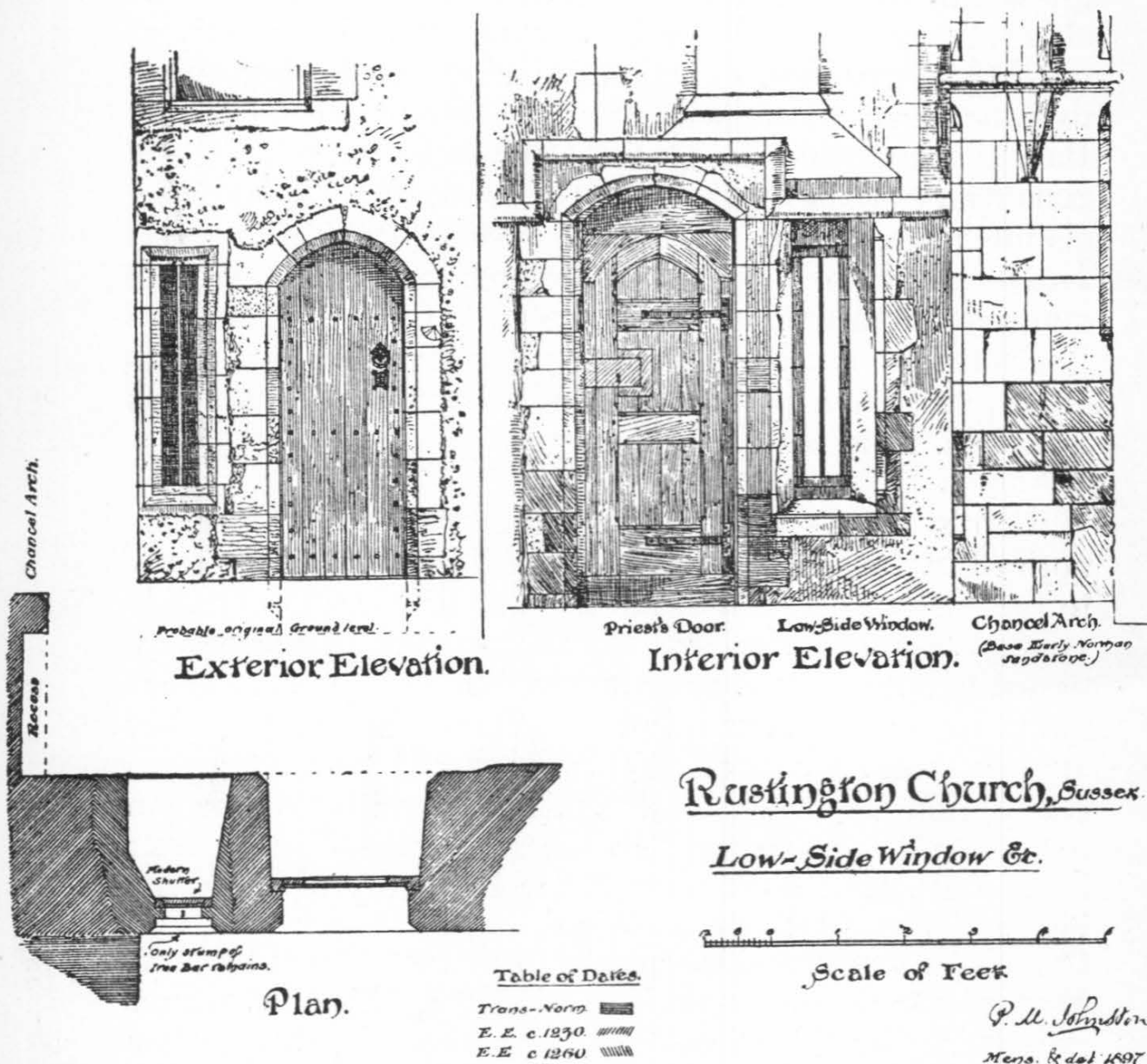
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*Burpham Church.
Low Side Window, S. of Chancel*

BURPHAM.—This beautiful old church, so picturesquely situated on a spur of the Downs overlooking the green valley of the Arun, is replete with archæological interest. It consists of chancel, transepts, nave, south aisle, porch and western tower, and contains work of all periods, from Saxon to late Perpendicular. In the usual place, the south wall of the Early English chancel, close to the chancel arch, is inserted a Decorated low side window of one light, ogee-headed and trefoiled, and almost an exact replica of an ordinary window in the nave of Ford Church. It is of local sandstone, with Caen stone head, its sill is rather more than 3-ft. from the ground, and the opening, chamfered and rebated on the outside (now glazed), is 1-ft. 1½-in. wide. Internally the opening is finished with a segmental arched head in one sweep, and this and the jambs are of chalk. Its inner sill is level for part of its depth, so that a person could sit thereon, and is about 2-ft. 9-in. from the chancel floor.

RUSTINGTON.—Why has the Arun valley been so little noticed by Sussex archæologists? They flock, it is true, to the sights of Arundel, but the beautiful and venerable village churches hard by, equally worthy of notice, are so little heeded that no word of the actual fabrics has found its way into our volumes. One would suppose that anyone with an archæological soul would take delight in Rustington Church. Its delightful Transitional Norman tower is one of the most picturesque “bits” in Sussex; its ancient wooden porches are well worthy of note; its interior, with portions of several dates in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, has much to attract the antiquary. But, so far as the church fabric goes, the only things noted in our “Collections” are the discovery of a sculptured table and an encaustic tile. I can but offer to do my best to repair this neglect at some future time. *Revenons à nos moutons.* The low side window here is quite of another type to all the foregoing examples, and is unlike any that I have met with elsewhere. It is manifestly an afterthought, and a somewhat clumsily executed one. There must have been, one would

imagine, some strong reason for disturbing the walls of a chancel erected, say, in 1230, by the insertion of this narrow opening between the priest's door and the chancel arch in, say, 1260, for that these features *are* of different dates I feel certain and my drawing will show.⁶ There may not be so wide an interval as 30 years between the

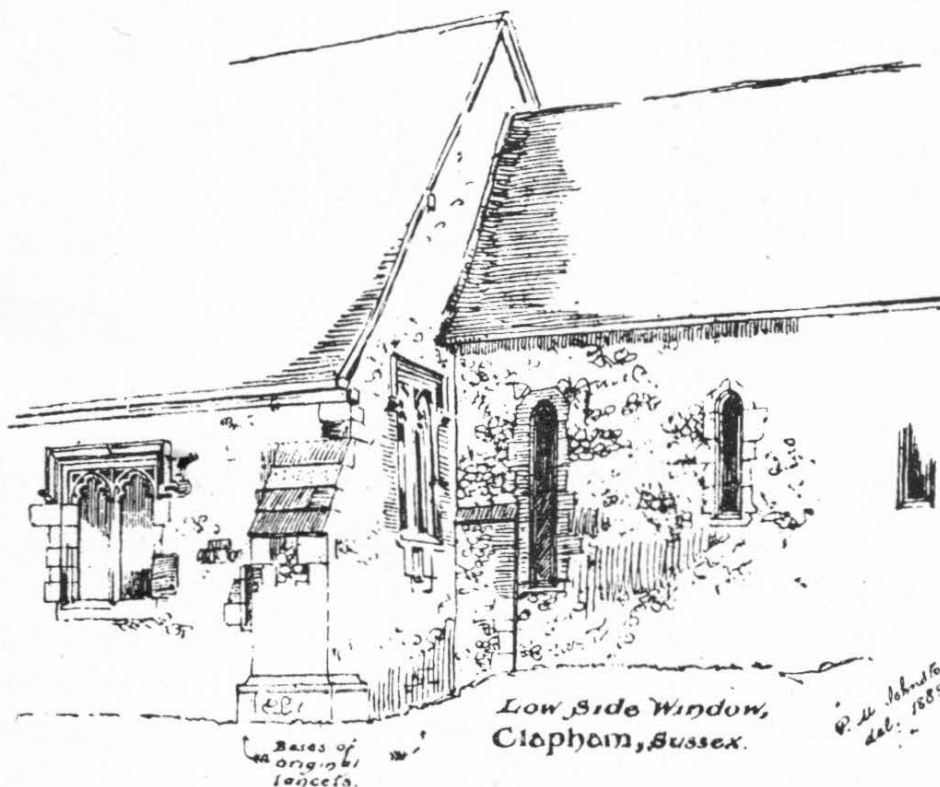


two dates, but that only makes one suspect the more an exceptional reason for the alteration. Caen stone is the stone used throughout the various styles in which the church was built, except a little chalk and sandstone, as in the bases of the Early Norman chancel arch piers. The

⁶ As for example, the vertical joint between door and window jambs.

chief point to be noted about this tiny window is its narrowness (it is only $6\frac{1}{2}$ -in. wide); next, its nearness to the ground (even allowing for the level having risen about 1-ft. the outside sill would be still only 2-ft. 3-in. above the ground); and, thirdly, the fact that its sill internally is admirably adapted for sitting in, so as to approach the opening.

CLAPHAM. — The late Sir Gilbert Scott has fully described this interesting little church in Vol. XXVI. of these "Collections." In his account (after mentioning remains of early Norman work) he ascribes the church "in its main design" to "the earliest period of the Early English style, dating from about the end of the twelfth century." With every respect for so eminent an authority,



Low Side Window,
Clapham, Sussex.

I should be inclined to put the date of re-edification at a later date, say, at least, 1210—1220. The character of the work, though early, is free from all trace of Trans-Norman. The low side windows here again are elongated lancets, ranking as the westernmost of three in the north and south walls of the chancel. They are chamfered and

rebated on the outside, the opening being about 10-in. wide in the clear and the external sills about 4-ft. from the ground. Their heads are internally splayed like the jambs and have no *drop* arch—a proof of early date. They are finished at the internal sill level with a moulded string course, and the sills are flat and rather more than 4-ft. from the chancel floor. The actual external stonework of these windows, it should be mentioned, is *modern*, the side walls of the chancel having been, as Sir Gilbert Scott says, “much mutilated in modern times by the formation of large windows.”⁷ I take it, however, that what we now see is a faithful restoration of what Sir Gilbert Scott found to have originally existed, and presuming this to be the case, these windows are decidedly early examples of low side openings.

LANCING.—I regret that in former visits to this church I omitted to take any measurements of the low side windows. My attention was concentrated upon the interesting Trans-Norman porch, and I have only a photograph recording the fact that there *is* such a window in the south wall of the chancel, and a perspective sketch shows one exactly similar in the north wall, near its western end. They are trefoil-headed, late in the Early English style, and long single light openings. The sills externally appear to be about 4-ft. from the ground. 1280 A.D. might be the date of these windows.

COOMBES.—My authority for the existence of a low side window at this church is a communication upon these openings to the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” 1844, Part II., pp. 41-42, wherein the writer says:—“A reverend friend has just informed me that at about 4-ft. from the ground through the lower part of the southern wall of the chancel at Coombes, in Sussex, was a circular hole, about 18-in. in diameter, having splayed sides, and apparently coeval with the old wall, but certainly not made for a window, and therefore probably a confessional.” Mr. J. L. André tells me that this example is

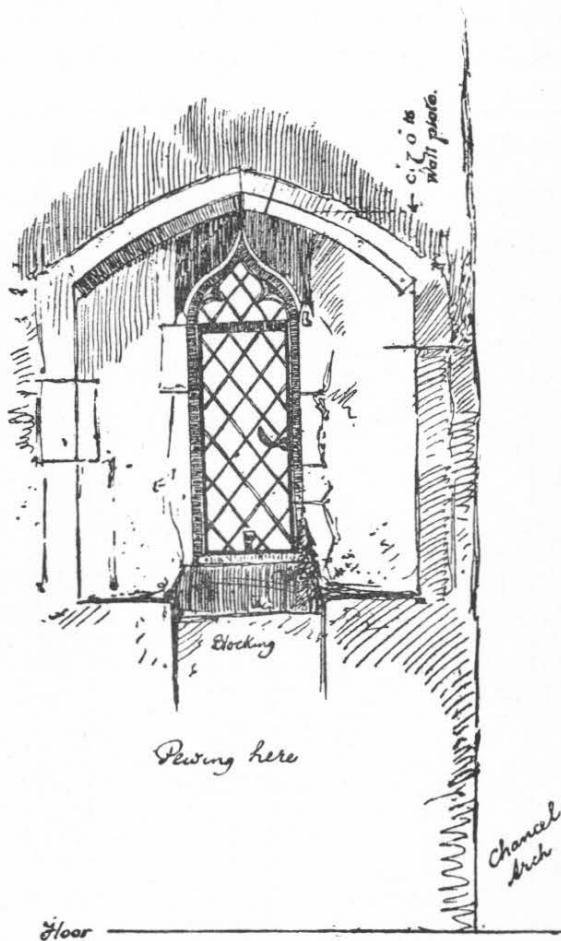
⁷ See Grimm and Lambert’s views of this church, drawn a hundred years ago. Add. Burrell MSS. 5,674, 5,677; British Museum.

of Perpendicular date, and is figured in a perspective view in Lower's "Churches of Sussex," p. 298.

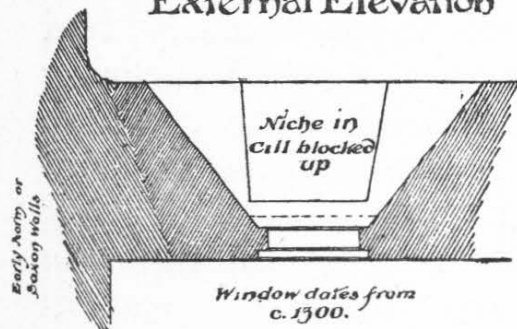
BOTOLPH'S.—This little known, but very interesting, church is briefly alluded to in Vol. XVI. "S.A.C." as possessing (on the authority of the late M. H. Bloxam) pre-Norman features. My own examination of the building on two occasions leads me to agree with this



External Elevation



Internal Elevation.



Window dates from c. 1300.

Plan.

Botolph's Church, Sussex.

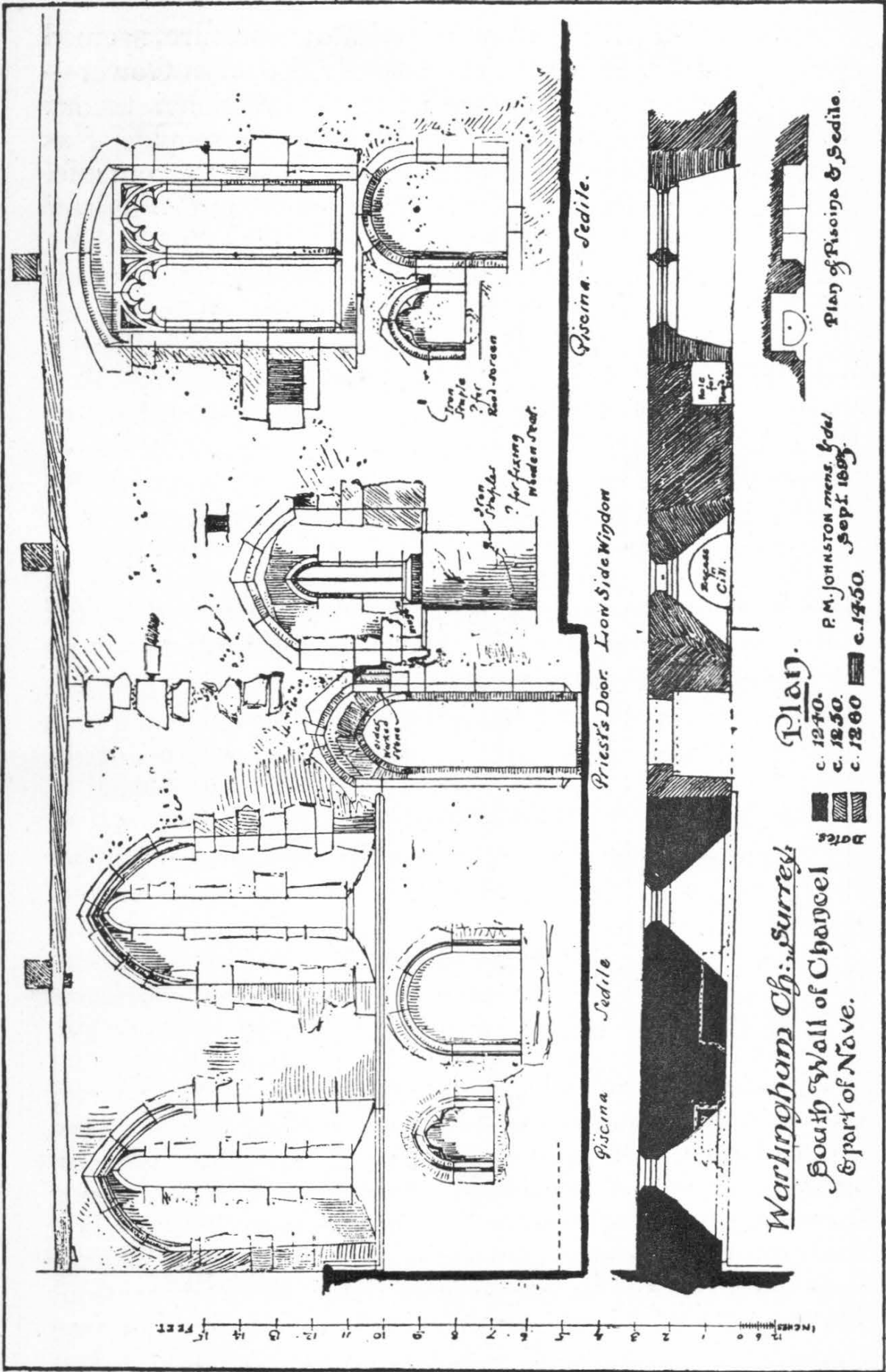
Low-Side Window on S. of Chancel.

Inches Feet.

P. M. Whiston
mens. & del.

view, as regards the nave and chancel arch, which well merit a careful examination. The small chancel would appear to have been rebuilt in the early Decorated period (1290 to 1320). All its windows, at any rate, are of that date, including the low side window here illustrated. This is in some respects one of the best examples—as it is also one of the most elegant—that I have come across in Sussex. There is another similar to it on the north side of the chancel, immediately opposite, but differing in its height above the floor and in other details. The features to which I would specially draw attention in this example are, firstly, the sun dial marking on its right hand external jamb. Whether by accident or design this rough scratching, which may often be noticed on the outsides of churches—on the south wall, generally on a door jamb—is to be found on, or in close proximity to, three specimens, at least, of the low side windows in Sussex (Ford, Rustington and this example); and it is, I think, not unimportant to record other instances of its occurrence, as it would seem to connect *external* approach to the window with certain times of the day. There is no priest's door in the chancel here; and the more likely place for such a sun dial marking, *per se*, to be placed in would certainly be somewhere in the neighbourhood of the south door of the nave rather than in a secluded corner like this, unless, of course, it served some special purpose so placed.

Secondly, the traces indicated on the drawing, and plainly observable in the actual masonry, of the existence of a now blocked-up niche or recess in the internal sill. Perhaps I should not have noticed this particularly, had I not visited this church within a few weeks of discovering a similar feature in a low side window of a Surrey church which I was then restoring. For the purpose of comparison I give a measured drawing of this Surrey example, made originally at the request of the late Archbishop Benson, who took a keen interest in certain finds made during the progress of the work of restoration. The recess in the sill, with a step up, so that anyone might approach quite close to the external opening, taken



in conjunction with the narrow window aperture, seemed to me—and I may say to the late Mr. Leveson-Gower—to tell much more in favour of the confessional theory than of its various rivals. The window is so placed as *not* to command a view of the altar from the outside, which goes against the “lychnoscope” and “leper” theories, so generally held at one time. The Archbishop, who clung to the latter theory, quoted the low side window in Addington Church, Kent, in its favour. I have since ascertained that this window is as inconveniently placed for a view of the altar as is the Surrey example. It is much to be wished that the niche in the Botolph’s low side window might be opened out; at present it is almost entirely hidden by pewing. I could find no trace of a similar niche in the window on the north side, which is set rather higher in the wall.

EDBURTON.—The fact that there are two low side windows at this church is noted in a letter by Mr. J. F. Fowler in “*The Antiquary*.”⁸

KINGSTON-BY-SEA.—I have a note of the existence of a low side window here, but am unable to give any details.

East Sussex.

BOLNEY.—A photograph in my possession shows a low side window in the usual position on the south side of the chancel. It would appear to be of an early Decorated date, and is a trefoil headed lancet, moulded on its outside angles with a “torus” or “wave” moulding, characteristic of the early work of this period (1280-1310).⁹

HANGLETON.—Mr. C. E. Clayton has described this church briefly in Vol. XXXIV. of these “*Collections*,” but no word is said as to the low side window, on the south side of the chancel, near its western end. For knowledge of the existence of this I am indebted to a writer in the March number of the “*Archæological Journal*” for 1854 (p. 36), who says: “At St. Helen’s, Hangleton, in Sussex, is a south low window

⁸ “*The Antiquary*,” Vol. XXI., p. 126.

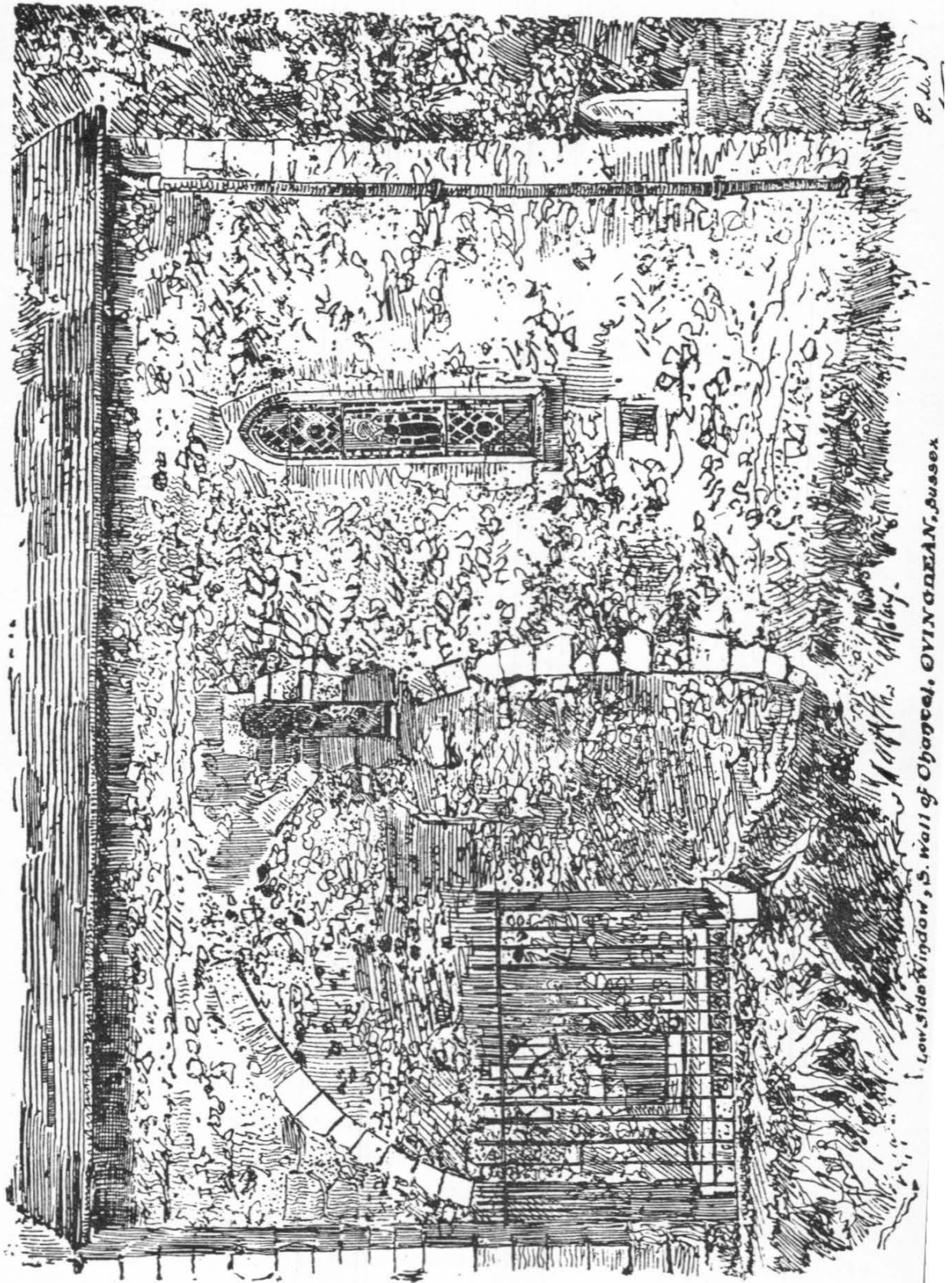
⁹ See Arlington Church, *post*.

provided with grooves" (that is, *rebates*) "and bolt-holes for an external shutter." This window is five feet by thirteen inches, and "has a pointed trefoil head of early Decorated character." A photograph, recently purchased, confirms this statement, and shows this example to resemble in date and form that at Bolney.

PATCHAM.—I have a note of the bare fact of the existence of a low side window at this church, but no particulars as to its character and date.

OIVINGDEAN.—The south chancel wall of this ancient and interesting little church—like the building as a whole—is full of puzzles. *First*, we have the Saxon or Early Norman Church, of which, to take the south wall as an illustration, the herring bone flintwork, and the eastern quoin of *flint* in place of ashlar, are remains. *Secondly*, about 1200-1230 we have evidence that a nave and chancel aisle were projected on the south side, and for that purpose the pointed arches, now blocked, were opened in the earlier walls—one such being pierced through the chancel wall—and the aisles probably built. They were destroyed, probably in 1377, by French pirates (as Mr. Hussey shows in the case of the neighbouring church of Rottingdean). The piercing of this arch in the chancel caused the disuse and partial destruction of the narrow little early window. But when the question came to be considered of repairing the damage caused by the pirates, and it was decided not to rebuild the destroyed aisles, this little window of Saxon or Norman date was re-opened, and the aisle arch filled up with flintwork. Whenever this was done (probably late in the fourteenth century) a low side window was inserted in the otherwise solid blocking of the disused arch, and this latter—a wheel within a wheel!—was in its turn blocked, probably at the Reformation,¹⁰ and so continues. The arch stones of this window, and, lower down, what I take to have been its sill (the jambs have disappeared), may be perceived, behind the railings of

¹⁰ It is shown *open*, however, in Lambert's view; Add. Burr. MSS., 5,677.



Low Side Window, S. wall of Chapel, Ovingdean, Sussex

P. 11.

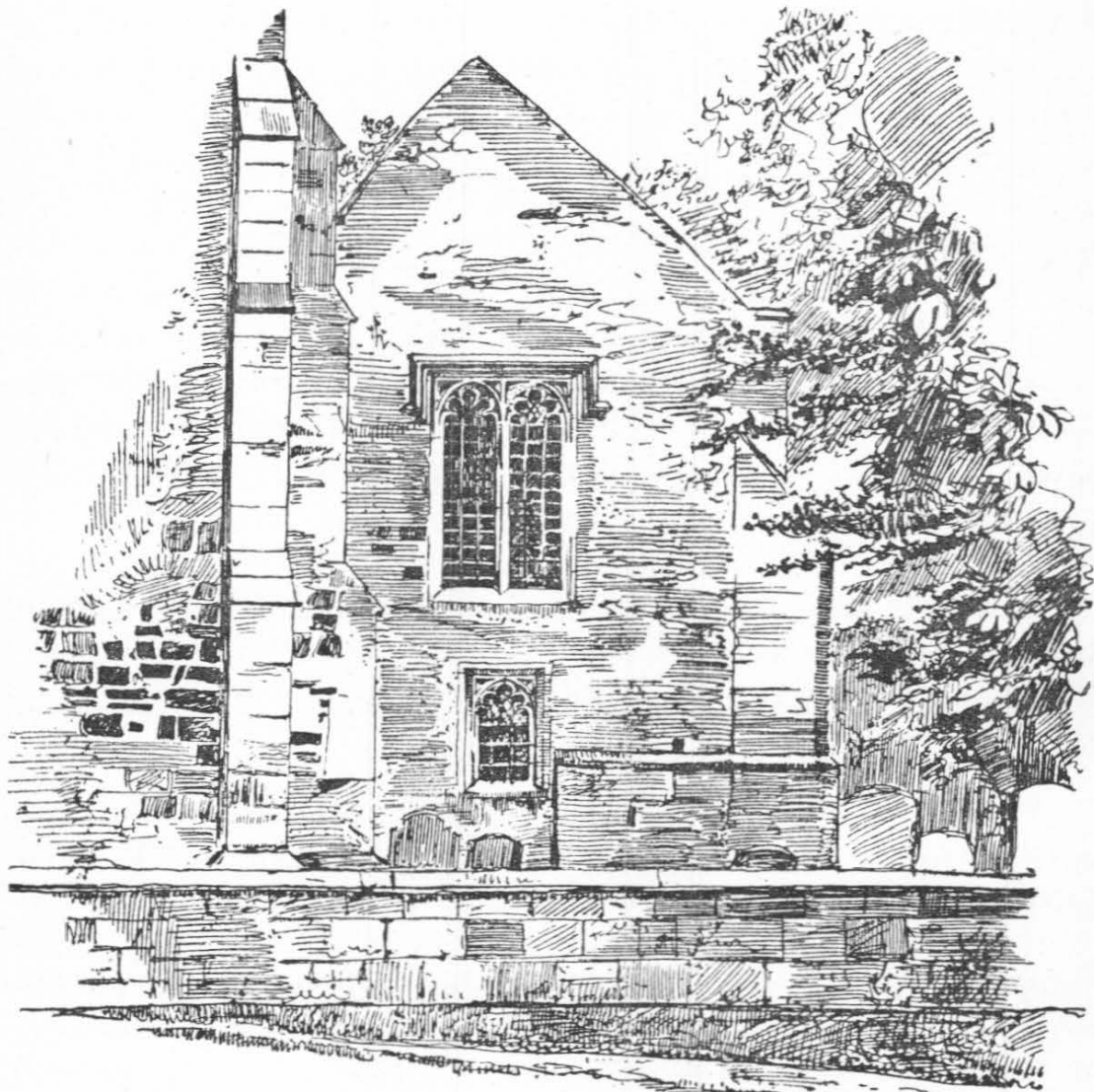
the tomb, in the western half of the arch; and a reference to the illustration will show that the sill is not more than 2-ft. above the present ground level. It is much to be wished that this opening should be cleared of the blocking on the interior side, so that its ancient use might be more easily discernible. At present it might be passed over unnoticed by the casual observer.

STREET.—I know nothing more of the low side window here than the statement in Mr. Hussey's book (p. 293): "In the chancel a low side window has been closed."

WORTH.—A reference to the plan of this deeply interesting Saxon church given with Mr. Walford's article in Vol. VIII. of these "Collections" will show the position of the low side window. It is of two lights and of early Decorated character. Curiously enough, every other feature of the church *excepting* this window is mentioned by Mr. Walford. And, unfortunately, my own photographs, taken some years ago, were not very successful, so that I can give no details of this example beyond the fact that it is of Decorated date and has a foliated head.

ISFIELD.—What I imagine to be a low side window appears in a photograph of this church in my possession. It is in the usual position, on the south side of the interesting Decorated chancel, a single light, transomed opening, the upper part containing under its pointed arched head two trefoils one above the other. The lower part under the transom is also foliated in a peculiar manner. The height of the sill above the ground would appear to be about 5-ft. 6-in. This is the only example of a transomed low side window (if such it be) that I have as yet noted in Sussex, although many examples occurring in other counties could be cited. It is invariably the case in such instances that the upper part of the window has been glazed, and the lower, beneath the transom, has been originally only fitted with the shutter so characteristic of these peculiar openings. It would be interesting to know whether the window at Isfield Church shows signs of having thus been treated.

BUXTED.—At the time I visited this church I was bent upon examining some of its interesting early features, and thus neglected to take a detailed sketch and measurements of its singularly placed low side window; the illustration, however, shows its general character sufficiently clearly, and by the kindness of the Rev. R.



Buxted Ch. Sussex
Low Side window, W end of S. Aisle.

P. H. Johnson delt

Stanham, of Buxted, I am enabled to supply the following dimensions:—Width of opening, 2-ft.; height of opening, 4-ft.; from sill to ground, 4-ft.; from inside sill to floor, about 3-ft. Above the window, on inside, is a recess or aumbry. Its position, at the west end of the south aisle of the nave, is paralleled by the curious

thirteenth century examples in St. Mary's, Guildford, and Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, except that the latter are in the north aisle, and the explanation of its unusual situation may, perhaps, be found in the fact that an earlier opening, which may have originally existed in the usual position in the south wall of the chancel, was destroyed by the prolongation eastward, late in the fifteenth century, of the south aisle of the nave, and the consequent opening of an arch from the chancel into the chantry chapel thus formed. The date of this opening at Buxted would appear to be between 1450 and 1500, and it may therefore be placed among the latest known specimens, of which comparatively few exist. Low side windows of a date later than the end of the fourteenth century are rarely to be found. Nearly all the existing examples may be assigned to some date within the century succeeding 1250. Earlier examples are as rarely met with as are those of a later date than this period.

TARRING NEVILLE.—Hussey states in his account of this church (p. 294) that “in the south-west corner of the chancel is a low side window, but placed higher than they are often found.”

ALCISTON.—I am given to understand that a low side window exists here, but of its character I know nothing.

ALFRISTON.—The two low side windows are of late, or Transitional, Decorated date (*circa* 1370), in common with the general fabric of this interesting cross church, and are placed opposite to each other in the western ends of the north and south walls of the chancel. They are precisely alike, having flat, ogee shaped, cusped heads with spandrils sunk in the solid stone. That on the south is 1-ft. 2½-in. wide, rebated internally for a shutter, and its inside sill stands about 4-ft. from the chancel floor. That on the north is set about 18-in. higher in the wall. Both are grated with iron stancheon and cross-bars.



FRISTON.—This remarkable little church consists of chancel, nave and south porch, and within such limited compass contains many features of interest and of widely differing dates. Its pre-Conquest window and door on the south side of the nave, contrasting as they do with Early Norman work hard by, are worthy of a detailed description, as are also the unusually fine and well-preserved roofs, Decorated and Perpendicular respectively, over chancel and nave. The chancel arch is of peculiar corbelled construction and of wide segmental form, and

is connected with a somewhat similar wall-arch in the north and south walls—all of very singular character and perplexing as to date. In the recess formed by these wall-arches on either side of the chancel is set an early Decorated single-light window, not dissimilar to those at Botolph's Church, above described, but possibly a little later. They, and the chancel generally, perhaps date from about 1300. That on the north is set in the eastern half of the wall-recess; that on the south in the western, the latter being lower in the wall and having many of the characteristics of a low side window. It is 2-ft. 10-in. wide internally, and the outer opening is 3-ft. 10-in. high by 1-ft. 1-in. wide. The external sill is 3-ft. 8-in. from the floor and about 4-ft. 8-in. from the ground level. The outside stonework has been entirely renewed in restoration and now shows no trace of a rebate for shutter; whether such ever existed is therefore doubtful. The internal jambs, which are of Caen stone and chalk, have been evidently re-used from earlier Norman work, as they bear the axe-tooling of that era; a consecration cross appears on either jamb.

EAST DEAN.—Here, again, are several features puzzling to the archæologist—notably the northern tower with its destroyed oratory-apse of pre-Conquest date. Besides this tower, the church consists of nave and chancel, both of spacious proportions, and south porch: and the remains of a Trans-Norman pier in the south wall of the nave suggest that an aisle was either contemplated or built on that side. The original windows of the chancel—of the Trans-Norman period—and the low side window, which appears to be Early English, are all blocked up with the exception of that in the east wall—a poor Perpendicular specimen, having nook-shafts of the older Trans-Norman openings on either side internally. On the outside nothing is visible of these blocked windows, including the low side opening, the walls being covered with a thick coat of plaster. The low side window is apparently a plainly splayed lancet; its internal sill, hidden by seating, is about 2-ft. 6-in. from the chancel floor.

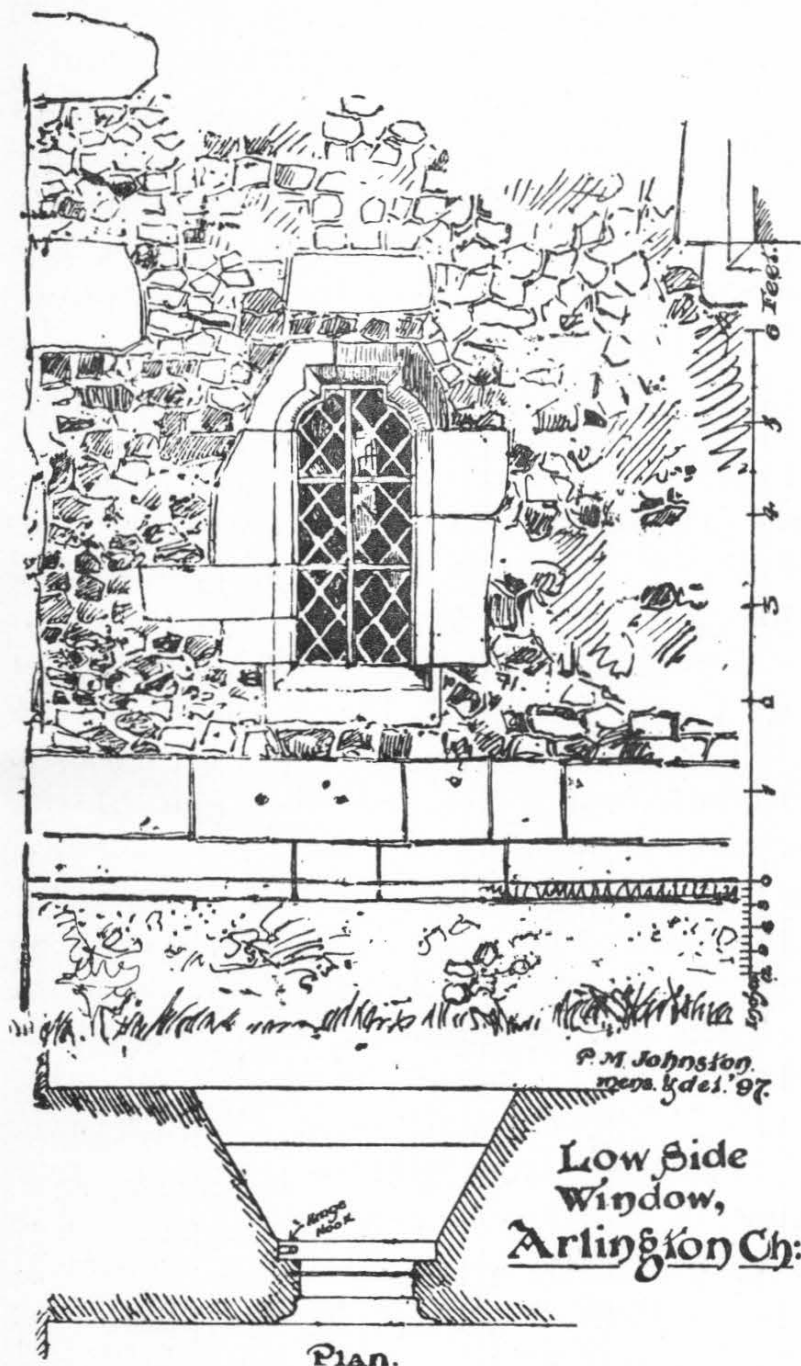
WILMINGTON.—Mr. J. L. André is my authority for this example, which he considers “supports the theory of the confessional use of these openings, for here, as the monastery was south of the church, the low side opening is not, as usual, on the south side, but in the north wall of the chancel.” In Vol. IV., “S.A.C.,” p. 60, is given a rough drawing of the north wall of the chancel and a ground plan of the Church and Priory. As in other cases, there is no mention of the low side window here *as such*. The writer of the article describes it as “a stopped window, much recessed in the inside, and so low as to be on the outside only 20 inches from the ground, and on the inside 4-ft. from the floor of the church.” The inside sill, he says, is *flat*, and 2-ft. 6-in. from the floor.

ARLINGTON.—This most interesting church, remarkable for its indisputably pre-Norman nave—but hardly less so for its twelfth century chantry chapel and beautiful Decorated chancel—has been the subject of a paper in Vol. XXXVIII. of these “Collections.” Of the series of plans, to illustrate the growth of the building to its present form, which is there given, the low side window figures in the third and fourth (on the south side of the chancel, close to its western end) and is described by the writer as “a leper window,” and as belonging to the “Transitional” period.¹¹ The first of these statements implies the acceptance of a very doubtful theory, but one open to argument. The second is simply non-arguable. For, without the slightest doubt, this opening—one of the best and most characteristic specimens I have found in Sussex—dates from the early part of the fourteenth century, when the chancel was remodelled after a fire. To any student of mediæval architecture the wave moulding—so characteristic of the Decorated period—which is carried round the jambs and head should be a convincing proof as to the window being of this date; and the shouldered-arch used for the head is found almost equally (and exclusively) in

¹¹ *i.e.*, *Trans-Norman*: Writers sometimes employ the term “Transitional” as though there were but one transitional period between styles.

Early English and Decorated work. At Over Church, Cambridgeshire, and Binstead, Isle of Wight, are low side windows with this peculiar form of head, and generally similar, which Mr. Parker instances as examples

of the early Decorated period "of the fourteenth century," or, as "perhaps belonging to the end of the previous century." The example which he illustrates from Over is, if anything, somewhat earlier in date than that at Arlington, judging by the character of its mouldings. The Arlington window is of green sandstone (the local variety called "Eastbourne Rock") and is set in walling of black snapped flints. It stands above a course of plain square stone and a projecting



plinth, and its outside sill is less than 4-ft. from the ground. Internally the opening is finished with a plain segmental arch in one sweep, broadly chamfered. Part of the sill is flat and only 2-ft. 9½-in. from the floor of the chancel;

and in the western jamb are the two hooks for hanging the shutter to. The latter does not now exist and the window has been glazed. It is not clear whether the iron stanchion and cross bars on the outside are ancient, or a modern restoration: probably the former, as they are somewhat irregularly spaced.

HELLINGLY.—This church contains some excellent specimens of Late Norman, Early English and Decorated,



to which last period its low side window, in the usual position in the south wall of the Norman chancel, belongs. This is a very plain example, built of local red and green sandstone; the opening a lancet, 1-ft. 4-in. wide and 5-ft. high, with an ogee pointed head, its sill not more than 3-ft. from the ground. Internally it is not dissimilar to the neighbour-

ing Arlington window, only taller, having a segmental arched chamfered head, and a sill, partly flat, about 2-ft. 6-in. from the chancel floor. A shutter hook still remains in the west jamb of the rebate inside. The opening is now glazed.

WARBLETON.—According to Mr. André, “there is a very interesting low side window of second Pointed date” at this church.

BURWASH.—The low side window here is in the usual position next to the chancel arch. It is a Decorated insertion in an Early English chancel, and is of one light, with a cinquefoiled head. Though a lofty opening, of greater height than the neighbouring lancets, it is set much nearer the ground than they, and is somewhat awkwardly squeezed in between the westernmost of them and the east wall of the south aisle. The low side window, in fact, here, as in many other instances, bears the stamp of an afterthought. At the time of my visit I took no dimensions; but I should say the opening is about 16-in. wide and its sill about 3-ft. 6-in. from the ground. I have no memoranda of its interior aspect.

WATLINGTON.—In Hussey’s note on this church is a mention of a low side window, closed at the time he visited the church. It would appear to be in the chancel, presumably on the south side.

BODIAM.—Hussey in his account of this church makes no mention of a low side window (a not infrequent omission on his part, however); but such a window is clearly shown on the illustration accompanying the account as existing on the south side of the Early English chancel. It is the westernmost of three plain lancets, each a little higher from the ground as one goes eastward. The two easternmost are close together, the low side window being separated from them by a broad space of wall. A priest’s door may have stood between. The outer sill of the low side window would appear to be some 4-ft. from the ground.

HASTINGS, ST. CLEMENT’S.—I noticed a peculiar small single-light window some years ago in the north aisle (nave) wall of this church. It is of one light, cinquefoiled under a square hood-moulding, dissimilar to any other window in the church, although, like most of them, of Perpendicular date. Its sill is at a convenient height

from the present outside level for a person standing in the churchyard to look through the opening. At the time I was struck with its similarity in most points to the typical low side window, but I took no sketch or dimensions.

In addition to the examples above described there are in Sussex two others so abnormal in their character and situation that I have preferred not to include them in my list, but to mention them separately. For the following particulars I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. L. André, who writes:

“There are two openings in the north porch at Horsham which I consider confessional windows. They occur one on either side of the doorway, close to the floor, and can have answered no purpose except for confession; they are in the outer entrance and give no light, neither are they ornamental.”

“There is a kind of low side window, . . . also on the chamber floor in the Priests' College at Chichester. This is above a piscina in the sill of the opening. The only object for the use of this window was to give light to the person using the piscina.”

Having thus endeavoured to convey some idea of at least a representative number of the low side windows of Sussex, with their varying dates and characteristics, it remains to consider the use, or uses, for which they were constructed. It to some extent reconciles conflicting opinions if we admit the *possibility* of these openings having been made—or, more probably, *used when made*—to meet more than one requirement.

1. *e.g.*, Lepers and others with infectious diseases *may* have received the Eucharist through some of these convenient shuttered apertures, although I cannot perceive the same likelihood of their having assisted at Mass by this means, in view of the undeniable fact that in the great majority of low side windows a view of the high altar is not to be obtained by looking through from the

outside. Another reason for doubting this as the original or principal use is that leprosy existed *before* low side windows, in Saxon times, and as a result of the crusades in the twelfth century and later. *Possibly*, therefore, such a use was an after-thought, and only occasionally practised.

2. The lychnoscope theory, originally put forward by the Cambridge Camden Society, "on the assumption that [these openings] were for the purpose of watching the paschal light," has since been acknowledged by that society to be untenable.¹² The kindred conjecture that they were used to place a light in, to scare away evil spirits from the churchyard, is equally untenable, owing to the inconvenient situation of such windows for this purpose.

3. The sanctus bell-cot found in other counties (such as Somerset, Wilts, Berks and Oxon) over the chancel arch, on the ridge of the east gable of the nave roof—but of which examples in Sussex are, I believe, almost unknown, at any rate as now existent—has been by some authorities supposed to have an earlier equivalent in the low side window. At first sight this seems a plausible theory. It is distinctly negatived, however, on a closer inspection by at least two facts. One is that, according to a writer in "The Antiquary,"¹³ the bell-cot and low side opening co-exist in many churches, of which he names several. Another, and even stronger, objection is that many openings are so narrow as to make the ringing of a handbell through them at Mass virtually an impossibility; the actual opening, also, is found in many cases to have been further impeded by an iron stanchion (*vide* Rustington Church example), or even, as in many instances throughout the kingdom, by a *grille* of iron bars, the openings through which are only a few inches wide. Is it credible that these grilles would have been

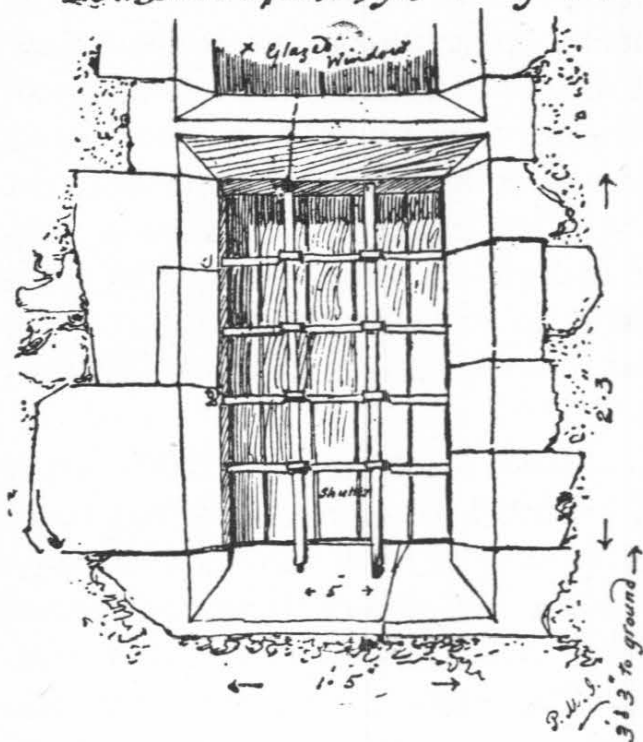
¹² "The Archæological Journal," Vol. III., p. 323.

¹³ "The Antiquary," Vol. XXI., p. 220. I have met with many examples myself where these two features are found together; or, which amounts to the same thing, a *central tower* (where the sanctus bell would be hung) standing immediately west of a low side window. At Alfriston Church, as above noted, these features are of the same date.

added to the already narrow openings if they had been intended to pass a hand and bell through? Let me hasten to say that numbers of examples of the low side

Hartley Ch: Kent.

Low Side Opening, S. side of Chancel



windows can doubtless be found where such a practice as handbell ringing *could* be, from the width of the opening, conveniently followed, but I contend that such was not the purpose that brought these openings into existence. There is really, with one important exception, no other theory that has been advanced that is worth serious consideration. Ventilation; to give light to the reader of the lessons; to sym-

bolise the wound in the Saviour's side; for offertory purposes; for the ringing of a bell to give warning of the approach of the priest; for the acolyte to pass the censer through, to fan the charcoal; for the distribution of alms, in money or bread:—these are some of the theories that have been at one time or another advanced. When one examines them in the light of the actual examples of low side windows their self-evident improbability is apparent.

4. The exception to all other theories that have been advanced, in that it accounts for examples all over the country, of all shapes, sizes and dates, is the theory that connects the genesis and use of the low side window (if not its *sole* use, or *all* its examples) with the practice of auricular confession. Mr. Parker, in the article in the "Archæological Journal" alluded to at the commencement of this paper, quoted this theory as "said to be the oldest, and to be supported by tradition"—not

unimportant points in its favour. In considering this view it may be well to touch upon the subject of auricular confession as an ecclesiastical institution.

The learned Dr. Jessopp reminds me, in a letter recently received, of the fact that "the obligation to make auricular confession to a priest, laid upon all (*omnis utriusque sexus*) only dates from the year 1216,¹⁴ and it must have been adopted very slowly—if for no other reason than that the great bulk of the clergy would know very little about it and would not be furnished with such manuals as would be necessary for their guidance in such a matter." As to this, I cannot but think that the practice of private confession to a priest, although thus made compulsory from a known date, and in particular with reference to the season of Lent, had been slowly growing up as a *voluntary institution*, and that in this form it can be traced to a very much earlier epoch than the thirteenth century. The machinery connected with the practice, and already in use, would therefore soon have been regularised and would be fairly familiar to the priests and laity by the middle of the century.

The question thus arises, in what place and manner were these confessions made? It is strange that our knowledge on this point should be somewhat uncertain. It is not until the sixteenth century that we meet with evidence of the existence of the shriving stool and pew, which probably date from the previous century, and certainly the structures now known as confessionals would appear to be of still more recent institution. To Mr. J. L. André and the rector, the Rev. G. C. Walpole, I am indebted for the information that the scanty remains of what is traditionally supposed to have been a shriving pew still exist in West Wittering Church, Sussex.

The probability is that there was in early times no fixed place and method, but that a variety of "uses" prevailed, and one of the earliest, and perhaps the most general, would seem to have been the screening

¹⁴ The fourth Lateran Council, at which compulsory auricular confession was established, was held in 1215.

off of the chancel, or some part of it, in which the priest sat, with a *velum* or curtain to separate him from the penitent. The late Archbishop Benson, writing to me some years ago, assumed this to have been the most common mode. It is to this already long-established practice that the Council of Durham, held in 1217, referred when it laid down that "the confessions of women were to be heard *without the veil*, and openly, as far as outward appearance was concerned, but still not so as to be heard by the public, but seen."¹⁵ Anyone who has noticed the narrowness of many of our reputed Saxon and Early Norman chancel arches will see how easily adapted they are for curtaining off the chancel.

Other and later methods (but in use concurrently with the *velum*) of hearing confessions are to be found in apertures pierced through walls and screens. As an instance of the latter there is a beautiful *parclose* screen, dating from about 1330, between the chancel and south chapel at Newington Church, Kent, in the close-boarded lower part of which are two perforations, one in the shape of a cross, about 5-in. square; and on the chancel side is the mark of where a bench was fixed against the screen. The cross would be at the level of the ear of a person sitting on the bench.

Much might be written of the many classes of openings to be found in the walls of our ancient churches, and of some of which the original purpose, or purposes, can now only be guessed at. The commonest and most familiar of these classes is the *hagioscope*, or *squint*, often found side by side, and, as I have instanced above, sometimes in actual combination with the low side window. Is it not, perhaps, too hastily assumed that these singular piercings through walls and piers, because they *usually* command a view of a high or side altar, were therefore made for that purpose alone? It is, I think, quite possible in many instances that these so-called *hagioscopes* were used as confessionals. That they should be so pierced as to make the altar visible does not militate

¹⁵ Bloxam, "Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture," Vol. II., p. 124, Eleventh Edition.

against such a possibility, but rather adds weight to it; while, as can easily be demonstrated, the peculiar resonance of these miniature tunnels makes a whisper at one end distinctly audible at the other. Another form which these perforations through internal walls assumes is illustrated by the undermentioned very interesting instance to which Mr. André draws my attention: "At Sandridge, Herts, there is a solid wall, pierced with windows, between the nave and chancel, and with a central doorway, by the sides of which are stone stall ends: on one is carved a listening priest, on the other a woman, beads in hand, which is curious enough in itself, but, I think, also shows that confessions were heard near the chancel arch, just in the locality where low side windows occur."

Such, then, were, as I conceive, the principal methods of making private confession in use in our parish churches in early times. Hagioscopes apart, there is no question that an aperture through an internal wall or screen was used as one such method. And if through an internal wall, why not through an external? In a small church, aisleless and with no chancel arch, such might be the only possible form of opening through a wall. The same persons who readily admit the probability of lepers having stood for perhaps half an hour at one of these low side windows to assist at Mass, find it hard to believe that anyone in ordinary health could have stood or knelt to confess and receive absolution thereat, because that rite might occupy about half the time. To have lived through the conditions of life in the thirteenth century—among which was the habitual spending of long hours in damp, draughty and unwarmed churches, mostly without seats, and having stone or earth floors—argues that our forefathers must have been a tough race, who would not think much of standing in the open air for fifteen minutes. Two writers in the *Church Times*, replying to a letter of mine upon this confessional question, have raised the objection that people surely would not kneel on the wet grass outside a church, when they could more easily kneel inside it. To this Mr. André, in a letter to me,

very pertinently rejoins that such a difficulty could be overcome by the very simple act of placing a kneeling-stool or bench outside the opening, such as would be used with any internal method of making confession. So much for the argument from probability. Is there, it may be asked, any stronger evidence to connect these low side openings, with their mysterious features of bars and shutters, sill-niches, book-rests, &c.,¹⁶ with the practice of auricular confession?

What may be the precise nature and value of the tradition which is said by some to associate this feature and practice I am unable to say. It would be interesting to know Mr. Parker's authority for the statement; local tradition is not without importance in such cases. Singularly, and for the consideration of this question, unfortunately, the low side window seems to have been an almost peculiarly English feature. I have never met with, or read of, any example in continental churches, saving the mention in Mr. Parker's article of the existence of one in La Sainte Chapelle, Paris, and the following passage (kindly quoted to me by Mr. J. L. André), from a paper in the "Ecclesiologist," Vol. XIII., p. 218. Writing upon "Some Danish Lychnoscopes," the late Dr. J. Mason Neale says, after stating four reasons for his belief, "I confess these facts confirm me in the opinion I have always entertained that—granting lychnoscopes to have been sometimes employed for the administration of the Holy Eucharist to lepers or to Cagots—their real use and design was for the reception of the confession of all comers." This use in these cases also is said to be supported by popular tradition.

The only ancient documentary evidence that can be at present adduced in favour of the confessional theory opens up what is in itself a very wide and obscure question, viz., the position occupied by the several orders

¹⁶ I have refrained as much as possible from travelling beyond our county limits in quoting examples, but the argument requires that some weight should be attached to such remarkable features accompanying some of these openings as are to be found in the stone reading desk, niche for crucifix, and aumbry, all contained in a low side window recess at Doddington Church, Kent, and similar peculiarities in other instances at Melton Constable, Norfolk, and Elsfeld, Oxon.

of friars in regard to the parochial clergy and the people. I refer to a letter published by the Camden Society,¹⁷ written by Thomas Bedyll, clerk to the Council in Henry VIII.'s reign. As one of the commissioners at the visitation made on the suppression of religious houses and chantries, he writes to Cromwell with reference to one of the friars' churches:—"We think it best that the place wher thes frires have been wont to hire outtward confessions of al commers at certen tymes of the yere be *walled up* and that use to be for-doen for ever." I have italicised that expression "walled-up."

Now, if such external openings as that here spoken of (for *external*, from the nature of the case, they must have been) survived in use as confessionals down to A.D. 1535 in the conventual churches of the friars, why should not the low side windows, still to be seen in so many churches and chapels, have equally been used—whether by parish priests or friars—for the purpose of hearing the "confessions of all comers at certain times of the year?"

In the correspondence in the *Church Times* above referred to, Dr. Cox, the well-known antiquary, objects to the confessional theory in regard to low side windows on the ground that "at Northampton each of the four orders of friars had their large house and church, and yet all round the town the old parish churches show traces of these windows." Just so; and as in Northampton, so in other towns. But I take this very fact as so much evidence confirmatory of the connection between the friars and these peculiar openings—as so much proof of their powerful influence. In the popular conception of to-day monks and friars are often classed together, as though, for all practical purposes, they were the same thing under different names. In reality, each was the antithesis of the other, and inspired by radically opposite aims and methods. Seclusion from the world and their fellow men, contemplative devotion and a peaceful agricultural life was the ideal pursued by the monks, who

¹⁷ "Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries," p. 47.

velum), at an earlier date than the period of the coming of the friars—possibly as far back as Saxon times, certainly by the middle of the twelfth century. Such sporadic instances would exist to suggest to the rival parties a confessional that would give happy expression to their compromise, defining the jurisdiction of the one and safe-guarding the rights of the other. The parish priest would still go on hearing confessions at his accustomed place and times; the friars, wandering up and down the country side and through the towns, would know where to repair so as to systematically hear the people's confessions. Perhaps the news would be conveyed from one to another that Friar So-and-So was to be found "at his window" in St. So-and-So's Church for the next hour or two, and there the penitents would repair to confess to the holy man. May not the occurrence of dial markings in connection with these openings possess some significance when viewed in this light? Perhaps, too, the fact that the preaching friars—as in all their following of our Lord's injunctions to the seventy—used to go about two and two may be something more than a coincidence when looked at in connection with the large proportion of instances in Sussex alone in which *two* low side windows of the same date occur in the same church. This surely accounts for such duplicated openings more rationally than the sanctus-bell theory, which, logically applied, would suppose a bell to be rung simultaneously at both windows!

If the sanctus bell were the true explanation of the origin of these openings as a class, instead of only a use suggested by some of them when already in existence as confessionals, one would expect to find low side windows far more common than they are. In actual fact, however, and allowing for the destruction of a number at the Reformation and subsequently, they bear but a small proportion to ancient churches. Certainly not one in three of the churches in England in 1535 can have had a low side window. Surely, again, this proportion squares with the friar-confessional theory—an irregular use, partially, and often unwillingly, conceded. The very

roughness, and obviously hasty and amateurish construction, of many examples strengthens this argument.

Yet another fact that connects the friars with these openings is the coincidence of dates. By the middle of the thirteenth century the friars must have been well established. To that date we must look for the first authenticated examples of low side windows (saving the rare exceptions before alluded to); and to the next hundred years for the great bulk of extant specimens. After that date we find the number inserted *de novo* in more ancient walls getting smaller by degrees, until it is almost *nil*. Only if a chancel were *rebuilt* do we find that a low side window, having been in existence before, was repeated in the new work.

The period of the occurrence of these windows is, in a word, coincident with that of the friars' greatest influence; when that began to wane low side windows went out of fashion. While, therefore, examples of late thirteenth and early fourteenth century date can be counted by the hundred, when we come to the fifteenth century they may be reckoned by *units*.

The other theories applicable to low side windows in churches cannot be brought forward in the case of such a shuttered opening as that found beneath a big window in the hall of a fourteenth century Manor house at Sutton Courtney, Berks;¹⁹ whereas the confessional theory, especially as advanced in connection with the friars, renders it perfectly explicable. The intricacy of the tracery in this instance forbids such an explanation as that of the opening being used for the giving of doles.

The subject of "The Black Friars of Sussex" (Dominicans) has been very ably dealt with by the Rev. C. F. R. Palmer in Vol. XXVIII. of these "Collections," and many facts there set forth are of great interest in considering this theory. This order alone had houses at Chichester, Arundel and Winchelsea; and the others were doubtless well represented in the county.

¹⁹ Parker's "Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages," Vol. II., p. 273.

In conclusion, my desire will have been fulfilled if I have done something to vindicate a most unfairly neglected theory by bringing to light some of the evidence which Sussex can furnish on this vexed question. With the attainment of this object I shall not shrink from the charge of having stepped in where archæological angels have feared to tread!

NOTE.—In the plan of the Clymping low side window the width of the opening at its narrowest should be one foot, instead of 13 inches as drawn. The glazing in these rebated openings is now secured to the face of the stone rebate by a fillet of cement; it seems likely, however, that in the first instance the glass may have been inserted in oak casements, and these either fixed or hinged in the rebate. If this were so, the lower part of the frame may have been formed into a shutter, opening independently, on the principle of the small jib-door, used for convenience within a larger door, so commonly found in cathedral portals. This would answer to the arrangement, found in some low side windows, of a stone transom dividing the opening, of which the lower part only would be shuttered, the upper being glazed to give light.

