

## A SHORT ACCOUNT OF RYE CHURCH, SUSSEX.

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By JOHN BORROWMAN, A.R.I.B.A.

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THIS Parish Church is dedicated to St. Mary. The north aisle of the chancel is called that of St. Clare, the south aisle of the chancel being that of St. Nicholas.

The church is a large one and in Allen's *History of Surrey and Sussex* it is said to be one of the largest in the kingdom, and other writers also express this opinion. In Horsfield's *Sussex*, Jeakes is quoted as calling it the goodliest edifice of the kind in Kent or Sussex, cathedrals excepted.

There does not appear to be any record of the foundation of the church. Horsfield relates that Rye, as well as Winchelsea, was given by Edward the Confessor to the Monastery of Fécamp in Normandy and continued its property until anno 51 of Henry III. (1267), when the King reassumed it, granting in exchange various manors, &c. This fact is of great interest in examining the architectural features of the church, as there is a strong French feeling in some parts and there are points of resemblance to the work at the Abbey of Fécamp.

The Abbey of Fécamp, which is Benedictine, is dedicated to the Holy Trinity, so this church of St. Mary did not follow its dedication, as I have seen stated.

The church has suffered a great deal by reconstructions at various dates, some, no doubt, rendered necessary by damage inflicted by the French. In 1377 it is stated to have been reduced "nigh to ashes," and again in 1447 it was damaged by the French and the old charters, &c., perished.

There has also been neglect to contend with, and the internal stresses due to the pressure of arches and roofs.

The photographs with which this paper is illustrated were taken by Mr. J. C. Stenning, Honorary Photographer to the Society. The plan was prepared for my description of this church by Mr. A. E. Richardson, working with me, and he also prepared the section: one great object for the plan was to determine whether the axis of the nave agrees with that of the chancel, and this we have found is the case, as can be seen. In an earlier volume of these *Collections* is a paper on this church in 1870 by Mr. G. Slade Butler.<sup>1</sup>

The building is cruciform, with additions, and consists of nave and aisles with lean-to roofs, central tower and north and south transepts, a chancel of good length, with north and south aisles of large dimensions, each extending to the full length of the chancel and each having a gable roof.

There is a south porch to the nave aisle and another on this side next the south transept, with a vaulted chamber to the west of it. There is a north porch to the nave aisle next the north transept.

As this church was connected with a monastery and is a large one, its plan, as pointed out by Mr. E. S. Prior, in his *History of Gothic Art in England*, p. 58, edition 1900, differs from one of a parochial type proper.

The measurements of the church are as follow:—

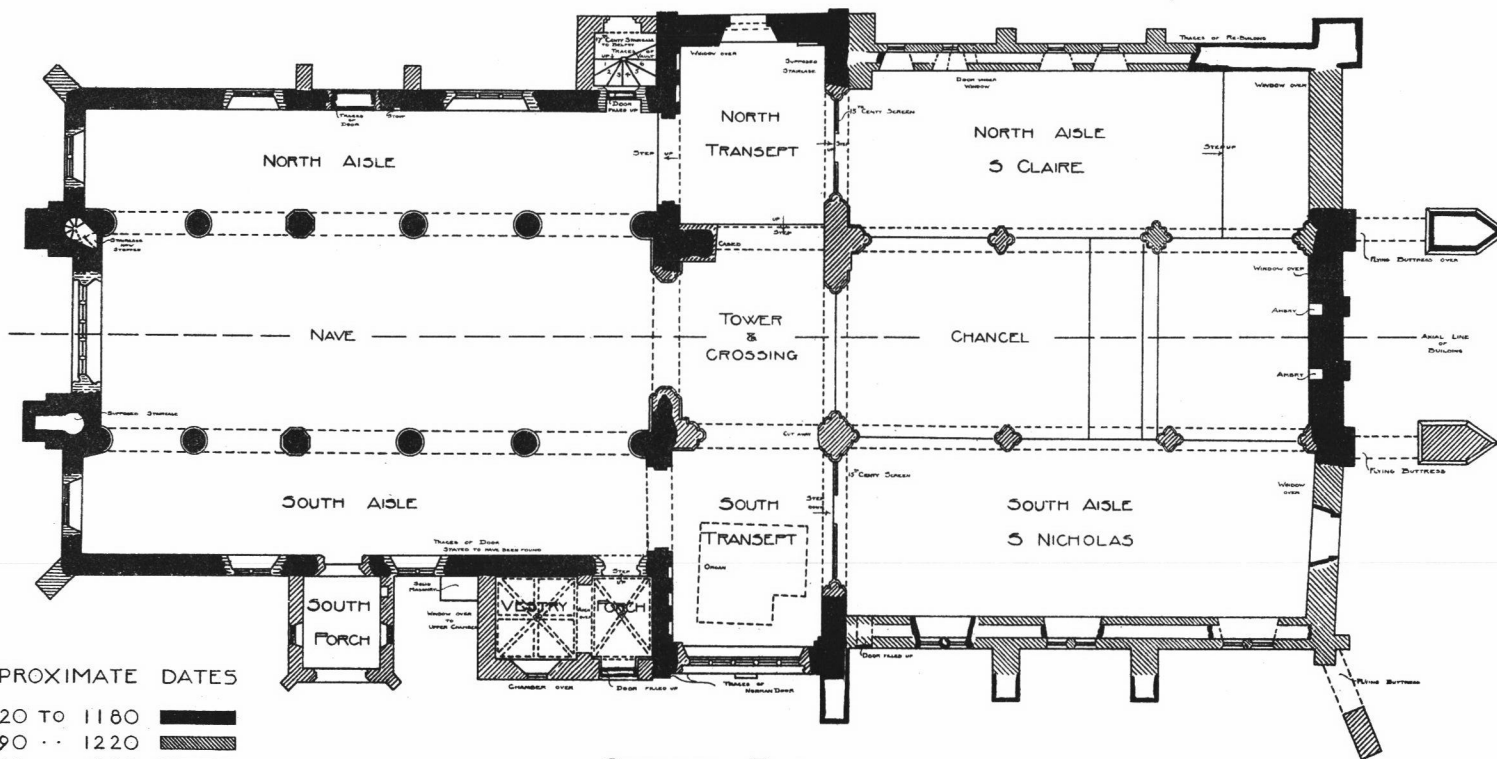
	Feet.	In.
Extreme length on centre line inside .....	156	6
"    "    south aisle and south chancel aisle.	159	3
"    "    of nave.....	71	8
"    width of nave and aisles west end .....	57	1
"    "    "    between piers.....	25	0
"    length over transept inside .....	77	3½
Width of south transept .....	20	1
Length of chancel inside .....	60	1
Extreme width of chancel and aisles inside .....	69	10
Width of chancel between piers .....	22	4
Height of nave floor to wall plate .....	30	9½
"    chancel floor to wall plate .....	32	9
"    tower to top of battlements.....	61	2
"    "    "    vane .....	90	8

The walls run from 3-ft. 7-in. to 4-ft. thick.

<sup>1</sup> *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 121.

# RYE CHURCH SUSSEX

PLATE I.

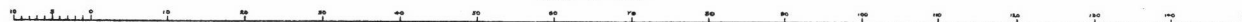


## APPROXIMATE DATES

1120 TO 1180	
1190 .. 1220	
1320 .. 1380	
1400 .. 1500	
MODERN	

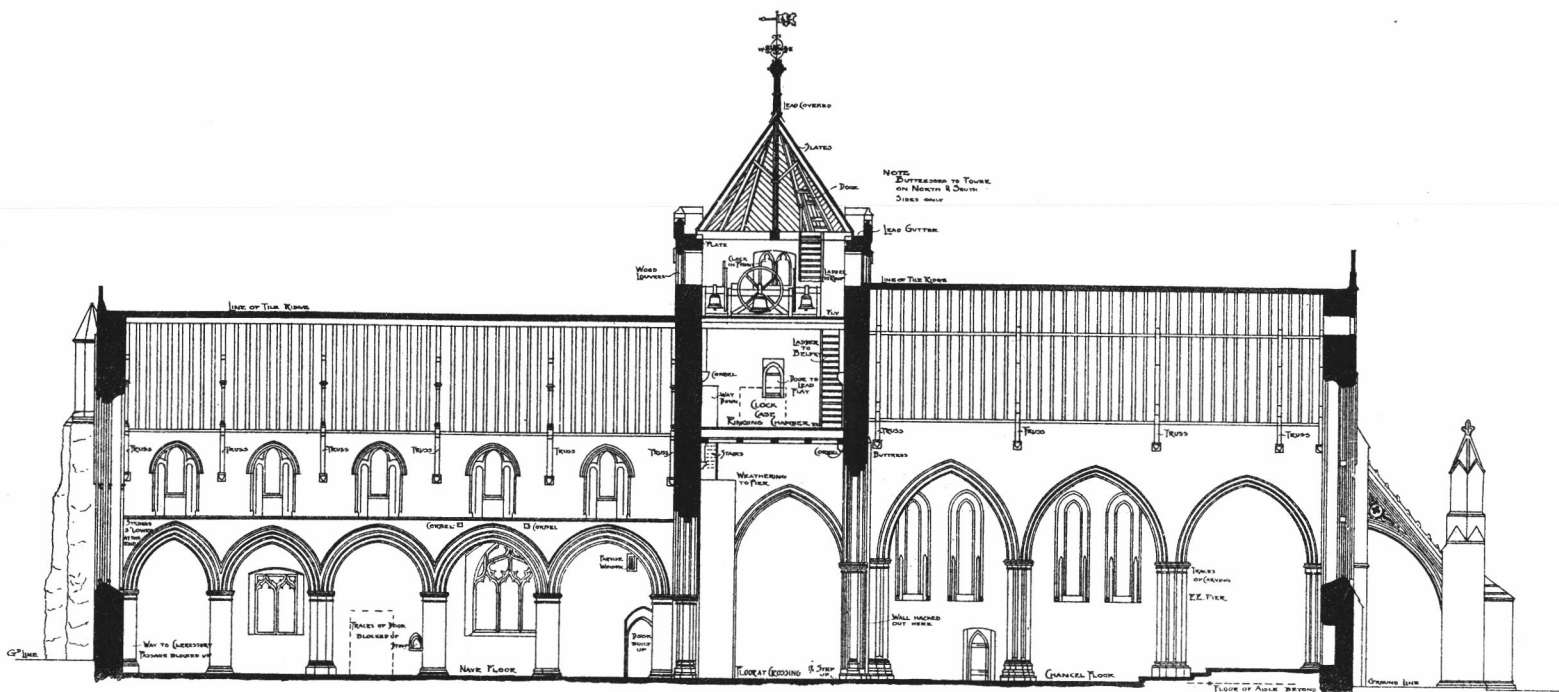
## GROUND PLAN

SCALE OF FEET



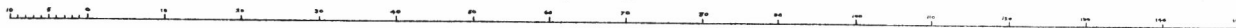
*W. H. Stiles*  
*Jan 27 1872*

RYE CHURCH SUSSEX



LONGITUDINAL SECTION LOOKING NORTH

SCALE OF FEET



J. B. Richardson  
 Nov. 2nd 1902.

Some interesting features of the plan (Plate 1) are as follow:—

The aisles are extended westward beyond the nave.

There are north and south porches next the transepts, with remains of chambers above them.

In addition to these porches there were two doorways, one in each aisle opposite the middle bay of the nave, the south one having the porch that exists in front of it.

The great number of doorways existing and built up, of which, counting those already noted, there are nine, namely: West door, nave; two doors north aisle of nave and two on south; one at end of each transept; one at each aisle of chancel. This does not include the east door of south aisle of chancel, which I believe to be modern.

The irregular shape and spacing of the piers of the crossing.

The large chancel aisles.

The flying buttresses at the east end.

I consider that the present church was probably begun in late Norman times, unless parts of the walls of any former building were used, but I have found nothing to show this. The section (Plate 2) should also be consulted.

A great deal of the building is late-Norman and Transitional, and with the exception of the aisles and arcades of the chancel, the flying buttresses and porches and later reconstruction in places, the plan is of these dates. I am of opinion that the chancel originally was without aisles.

When the north-east pier of the chancel arcade was re-built recently, I am informed it was found to stand on an old wall four feet wide, and this was probably the lower part of the original Norman north wall of the chancel, and the south arcade probably occupies the site of the original south wall.

The flat buttresses outside the east end are to be observed; these could not have been intended to stand the thrust of arcades. The two small flat buttresses under the late east window probably ran up the east

front, and these are early features, together with the two Norman aumbries in the east wall inside. It is to be noted that the Norman east end was square, following the British tradition, without an apse.<sup>2</sup>

The transepts had similar flat buttresses, and the lower part of a central flat buttress exists at the end of the south transept, and possibly there were in Norman times chapels to the east of the transepts opening out of them. The west end of the nave retains features showing the same feeling; the angle buttresses of the aisles at the west end are later.

The original church was therefore a complete Romanesque cruciform building, with several stages in the east, west and transepts fronts, where the large windows have since been inserted.

I think there is reason to believe that the usual method of starting the work at the east end was followed, and I should put the date at about A.D. 1120; possibly some of the work since destroyed was begun rather earlier, as in the filling in at a built-up passage in the transept, I came across a piece of Norman indented moulding somewhat earlier in style than the rest of the building.

The work at the upper parts of the transepts and in the nave is later, but all, with the exceptions previously stated, would probably date before 1180.

The chancel aisles and part of the north arcade of the chancel are Early English—the work being simple, but beautiful—dating from the beginning of the style probably about A.D. 1200 in the case of the north aisle, and about twenty years later for the south. The work in these aisles, which is described later, bears a resemblance to that in the nave at Fécamp Abbey, the first five bays of which were built by Henri de Sully, the fifth Abbot, after he had built the choir and transepts which he began in 1171; it is interesting to know that this Abbot was related to the Royal Family of England. The five last bays of the nave of Fécamp were completed

<sup>2</sup> The illustration (*S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 132) shows what might be a late double door or arcade at the east end outside, but I know of no authority for this.

by his successor, Raoul d'Argences, sixth Abbot, from 1190 to 1220.

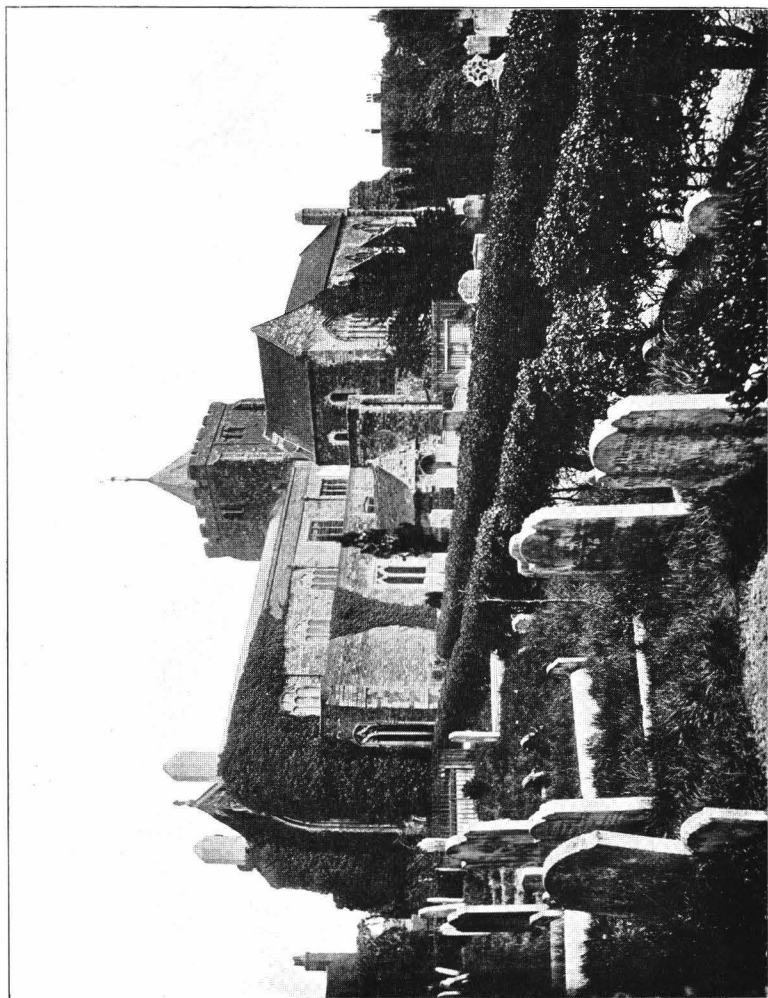
There are some features in the Decorated style, as the doorways in the nave aisles next the transepts, and some windows, mostly restored.

The columns of the chancel arcade, where they are in the Perpendicular style, and some other parts in this style agree with the date given for the last destruction by the French in 1447.

#### NAVE.

It will be well to begin the description of the church more fully by taking the nave (see Plate 4), and supposing we are entering by the great west door, which exists no longer, having been built up at the restoration of the nave. The front is also altered by the great west window. No doubt the original front was in more stages. The present west window appears to have been put in when the nave was restored, but it is evident that a large window had formerly been inserted here, as the jambs remain. A drawing, taken from an old print, shows what appears to be the upper part of the arch, but probably most of the tracery had perished, as several small openings are shown in the west wall. I am informed that the arch of the west door still remains behind the plaster and I hope that at some future date this and other features may be exposed. There are gates in the railing outside. As the ground has risen so much I believe this caused trouble and there are plenty of doors left, but nevertheless a west door, as formerly, would be a desirable feature, and to enter by going down steps has a precedent in the nave of Fécamp, which is below the ground at the west end, there being a fine flight of steps down at the great west door.

A spiral staircase, now blocked up, led from the north-west corner, as shown on the plan, to the clerestory, and the old print shows an external door at the south-west probably connected with a corresponding stair in the south-west corner, as indicated on the plan.



RYE CHURCH.

EXTERIOR VIEW FROM SOUTH-WEST.

*From a Photograph taken by Mr. J. C. Stanning in 1875.*



I may here mention that it is unusual in a church of this size to have passages in the walls, in the way and to the extent we have here.

The clerestory passage, no doubt, also ran across the west end and those in the nave formerly connected with those in the transepts.

I understand before the new work was done, some twenty-five years ago, the nave was in a ruinous condition, the columns were not solidly built and had suffered from the weight upon them, and a ceiling had been put across, but the roof has now been exposed on the old lines.

The present clerestory is a restoration and I cannot say whether it follows the original work. Thirty years ago there was a clerestory, partly in the Perpendicular style, evidently patched up, with a parapet to the nave roof instead of the present eaves; and the aisle had a simple parapet repaired in brickwork, where the present embattled parapet has been placed. These points can be seen in Plate 3, which is reproduced from a photograph taken by Mr. Stenning in 1875. The west door is also seen and the ancient jamb of the inserted west window.

The font at one time stood in the south transept. The present one is modern, copied, I believe, from an old one elsewhere.

There is an interesting collection of old Bibles and a diagram of the bells in the case at the end of the north aisle.

At first sight the stone of the nave arcade appears to have been coloured by the action of fire, and its appearance has led some people to suppose that is the case. But on inspection the stone will be seen to be a sand stone coloured in streaks like the Wealden formation stone near Tunbridge Wells; and as the same formation occurs on the south of the Rother probably the original stone came from Rye itself, or not far off, and was floated down the river.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In the transepts there may have been discolouration by fire. See *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 126.

The columns of the nave arcade are all circular, except the second from the west on each side, which are octagonal; the responds are semi-circular. There are remains of carved caps at the two responds at the west and the first column on the south—this is seen in illustration No. 16—but some at least of the old ones were plain, as shown by parts of the original work that remain. The bases show Transitional feeling and follow the piers without square blocks, unless these exist below the present pavement. The section is early and shows some resemblance to the attic base of classic times. The spacing of the piers and consequently the form of the arches vary in an interesting manner. The string-courses each side are not level in themselves or with each other. The spans of the arches on the south side decrease from 12-ft. 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. at the east to 9-ft. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. at the last bay at the west.

The arches of the arcades are pointed. The mouldings also show transitional features, with an early form of dog tooth in the labels; there is one carved boss as a hood mould termination over the first column on the north side.

The aisle windows, like the west window, are of late Decorated date and have mostly been restored; the square-headed ones with the original segmental inner arches are interesting. Possibly these windows were inserted after the destruction of parts of the church in 1377; they bear a likeness to the work at Etchingham, founded in 1386 (Rickman). This is a late date for work of this sort, but it would seem that the fully-developed Perpendicular style had not spread into this part of the country then.

In Parker's *Glossary* the three-light window in the north aisle of the nave is illustrated with the date *c.* 1360; this window is seen to the left in Plate 4, but it is a restoration.<sup>4</sup>

The axis of the church has been mentioned, but while in the nave it is as well to note the peculiar effect given to the view to the east. This is chiefly owing to the fact that the arch from the tower to the chancel is out of centre; the north side projects inwards beyond the line of that of

<sup>4</sup> See *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 126.



RYE CHURCH.

INTERIOR VIEW FROM SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF NAVE.

the arch from the nave to the tower, and the south side is some distance further to the south than the side of the nave arch, therefore more of the south arcade of the chancel is seen than of the north, and this gives at first sight an appearance of a change of axis when the chancel is reached, which is, however, not the case.

The axis points north of east and the transept is very slightly inclined.

In the north aisle, opposite the central bay of the nave, are traces of a doorway, which can be seen outside; and inside the stoup at the side is still in position on the right-hand as one would go out. In the south aisle opposite there is a Perpendicular doorway and south porch, the latter being restored; in the porch is a stoup, on the right-hand side of a person entering the church. It is possible that there may have been a custom for people to enter the church on their arrival by sea at the south porch and pass across and leave by the north door. Parker, in the *Glossary*, 5th edition, p. 448, indicates this idea in the case of another church.

Two corbels are to be noticed above the arcade, on the north side in the second bay from the tower; these are seen in Plate 4. I am inclined to think that these may have helped to support a minstrel gallery, or a small organ, of which, I believe, there are records of several in use in the church.

The arch to the tower is probably later than the nave, but is earlier than the responds that support it; possibly they have been inserted in front of the old ones, as the piers of the crossing have been greatly altered in later times.

The pulpit of wood which is seen in Plate 5 is interesting. Parts of it are of early sixteenth century date and the Linen pattern is seen in the panels.

The doorway next the transept in the south aisle is late Decorated and of very pleasing character. This door leads from the church into a vaulted porch, the external door of which is built up. This latter door is later in date and is seen to the left in No. 12. The vault is

quadripartite and has a rose for a boss, looking very like a Tudor rose, but on close inspection its centre will be found to contain a human face with the tongue out. Opening out of this porch on the west side is a chamber with quadripartite vaulting of late section with ridge ribs and a Tudor rose as boss. There is a circular window in the south wall;<sup>5</sup> this addition is of Perpendicular date and formed, I should think, a burial chamber, where daily prayer could be said. Together with the porch, it forms the present clergy vestry.<sup>6</sup>

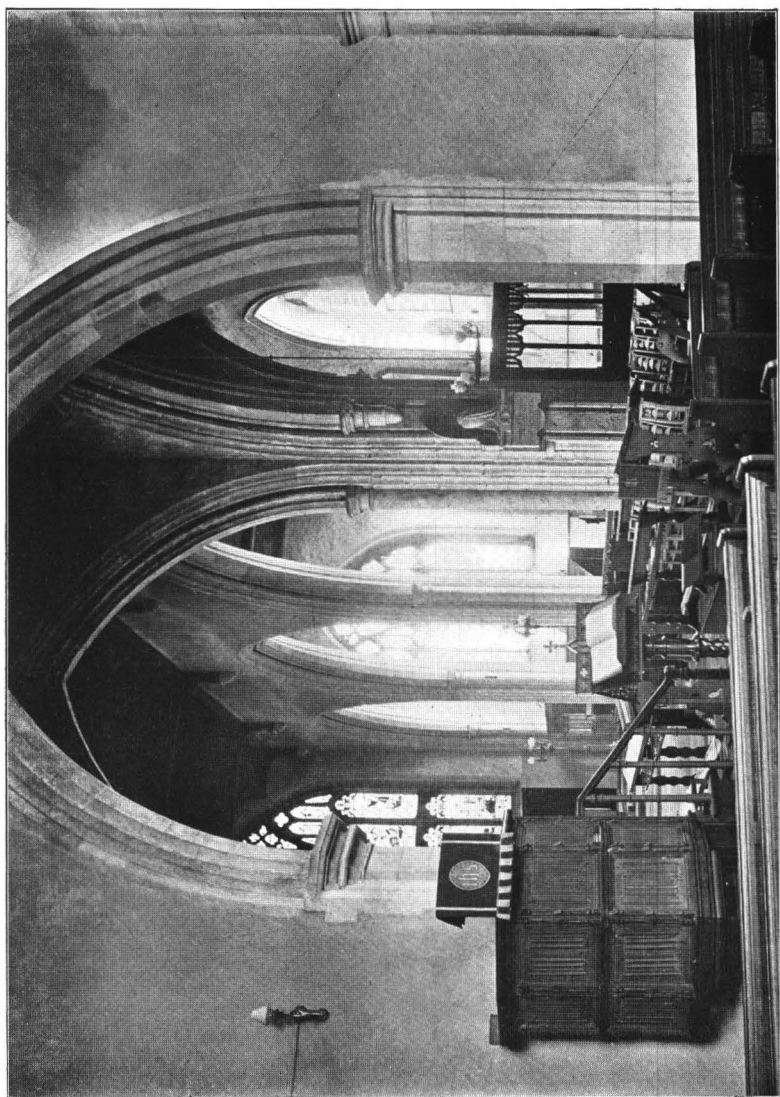
Above this porch and chamber was no doubt an upper chamber, and a space must exist now above the vaulting, as the lead roof is on a level with that over the aisle. There is an upper circular window, of the same sort as the lower one, built up on the west side. I am informed that behind the plaster, inside the aisle wall, are traces of a small door, part of which extended to where the present window east of the south porch is. Outside this window, as seen on the plan, is a mass of masonry now weathered off, which possibly contained a spiral staircase; but the modern gallery was entered here, where a door jamb shows on the outside, so the question is uncertain. I should imagine that this chamber was used by a recluse or anchorite. Thirty years ago, as seen in Plate 3, the south wall of the upper chamber did not exist, and there was a window to the aisle gallery.

In the north aisle next the transept is an early Decorated doorway, now built up. Outside this is a porch of later work. This has been altered to contain a staircase to the belfry. It was vaulted with a pointed barrel vault, evidently of early bricks. The exterior of the porch is flint work, and there are remains of a chamber above the former vault.

The upper chamber had two small external windows and one slit looking into the north aisle; there are traces

<sup>5</sup> Inserted in modern times. See *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 123. I do not agree with Mr. Butler's description of this chamber as being in the Early English style.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Crouche, Mayor of Rye, who died 1497, directed his body to be buried in the south porch. See *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 132. He may have meant this one.



RYE CHURCH.

VIEW FROM NAVE LOOKING SOUTH-EAST.

of a doorway in the wall of the transept at the higher level, but on the transept side the wall has been cemented over. Possibly there was formerly some sort of gallery at this level across the transept to connect with the passage in the wall round the chancel aisle.<sup>7</sup> This chamber may also have been for a recluse.

The roofs of the aisles appear to be late fifteenth century restored.

The arch from the north aisle to the transepts is semi-circular. This is just seen behind the nave arcade in Plate 4. The arch from the south aisle into the south transept is segmental. These arches are earlier and plainer than the nave arcades. The jambs have nook shafts each side of the central member. The capitals of the south arch (see No. 17) have foliage, and the arch is in square orders with a lower semi-circular member, and the bases have the lower member square with ornament in the angles. The north arch has only two square orders; it has scalloped capitals and the bases are without angle ornaments.

#### CROSSING.

The crossing under the tower is very irregular, the arches to the chancel and to each transept are Perpendicular in style and can be seen in Nos. 5 and 6; that to the north is the plainest; it springs at its eastern side out of the pier, which takes the nature of a wall here. At its western side it springs out of the irregular north-west pier of the crossing. This pier may have contained a staircase to the tower, as before the present wooden staircase (before mentioned) was constructed the access to the tower would have been inconvenient unless by way of a ladder from the floor.

Possibly the bells were rung from the pavement level. The eastern face shows cement work and may be the position of a door. This pier has been cased in Perpendicular times. The re-entering angles of this and the south-west pier have been strengthened with small buttresslike projections with weathered tops.

<sup>7</sup> S.A.C., Vol. XXII., p. 129, confirms this.

I do not think that much, if any, of the original tower remains. Possibly it fell or was much damaged. The upper part has buttresses only on the north and south sides (see Plate 3); the belfry lights are in the Perpendicular style.

A feature of the church is the long pendulum which swings at the crossing. The clock is a most interesting one, having been bought for the church in the middle of the sixteenth century. I am informed it was originally made with a balance before pendulums were used and was later fitted with a new scape wheel and pendulum, and that it ticks some fractions of seconds and not an even number. The late Gothic iron frame with buttresses and embattled tops to the standards is very interesting.

The six old bells were recast in the eighteenth century and two more were added. They have since been re-hung and the cannons removed. The inscriptions are interesting and can be seen in the list exhibited in the church.<sup>8</sup>

#### SOUTH TRANSEPT.

The south transept (see No. 6), in which the present organ stands, has a most interesting wall to the west, not well seen, with rich chevrons and carved caps, the abaci being also ornamented (see No. 17). The south wall has been mentioned before as showing the early work also, and must be viewed externally. There was a doorway here with a straight sided pediment and shallow porch after the late Norman manner and something like that at St. Margaret-at-Cliffe, Kent. What is left of this door is shown in No. 12.

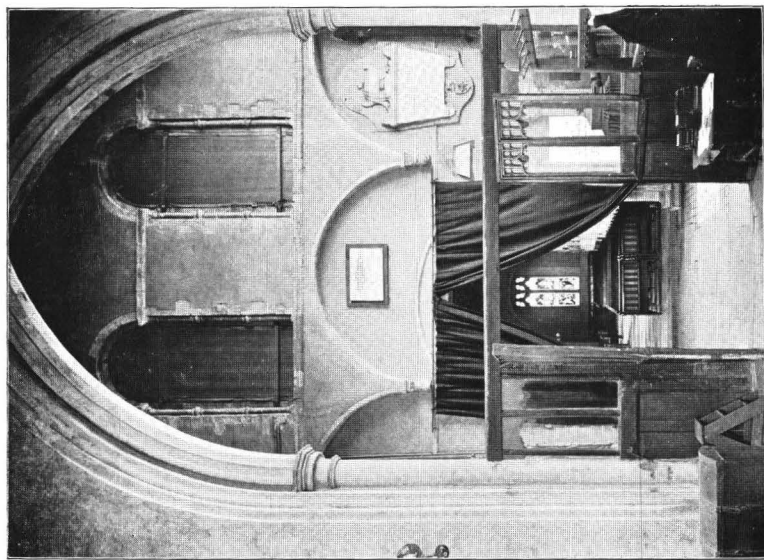
There are also early shafts at the south-east angle inside and in the upper part of the east wall.<sup>9</sup>

The large south window at the transept end now boarded up is an insertion of late Perpendicular date and some time since was restored.

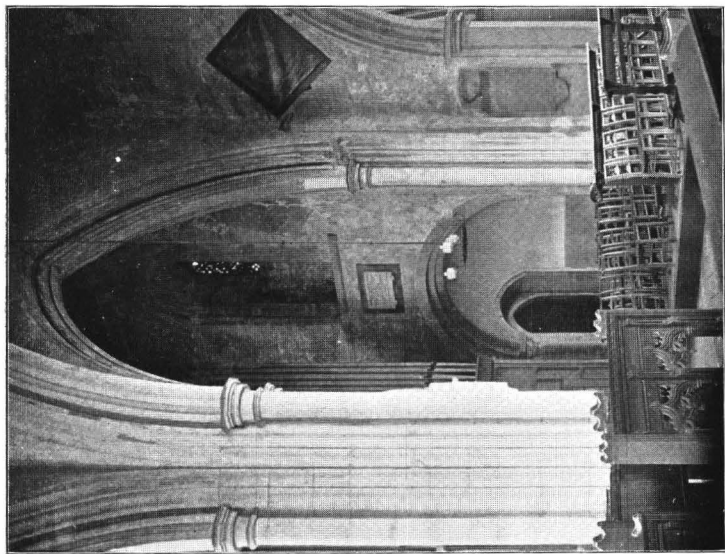
<sup>8</sup> See *S.A.C.*, Vol. XVI., p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> A wall arcade of two arches on the east wall is mentioned. *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 126.





WEST WALL OF NORTH TRANSEPT.



VIEW FROM CHANCEL INTO S. TRANSEPT.

RYE CHURCH.

A beautiful feature of the transept is the clerestory on the west wall with its semi-circular arches and banded shafts with foliage capitals (see No. 6).

The clerestory passage was formerly continued across the end before the large window was inserted, as we found the angle of the passage inside.

The arch to the chancel aisle is Perpendicular in date. There are traces of a screen higher than the present one, and mortices in the arch, probably for the suspension of figures. The screen which is seen in Plate 5 is of fifteenth century work and was originally painted, as some of the colour can still be seen. The appearance of this transept has been spoilt by the organ.

#### NORTH TRANSEPT.

The north transept has a door in the north wall, the exterior arch being semi-circular, and although it contains some stones of the character of the church it has evidently been restored.

The large window replacing a former inserted Perpendicular one<sup>10</sup> has been put in recently, and is in harmony with the rest of the work. The buttresses outside had shafts at the angles, as is shown by the remaining part at the top.

The west wall of this transept (inside) is very interesting. The lower wall arcade, at the side of the arch opening into the north aisle of the nave, has an unusual variety of scalloped capital, the arrangement of the small angle cone being very pleasing. The arches contain the double and single billet alternately and the embattled or key ornament. This latter occurs at St. Margaret-at-Cliffe and is dated in Parker's *Glossary* as 1130.

The corbelled-out arcade, composed of one arch and two portions of arches on the wall under the clerestory string-course, gives a very good effect, as seen in No. 7.

The clerestory is at present boarded up as access to the tower. It has round-headed lights and arcade as in

<sup>10</sup> This is referred to in *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 130.

the south transept, the bands on the shafts being ornamented and the capitals carved with foliage in the same manner. The clerestory passage also, no doubt, originally returned across the space now occupied by the large north window, as stated earlier.

It should be noted that the designs of the west wall in each transept are different.

The east wall of this north transept, as seen in No. 8, has a Perpendicular arch opening into the north aisle of the chancel.

The screen is composed of pieces of the fifteenth century screen made up and is probably lower than it was originally.

On the east wall of the transept next the arch is a fragment of a similar arcade to that on the west wall, with two varieties of single billet moulding.

The start of the return arcade across the old north wall is seen here.

The irregularly placed corbel in the tower wall probably carried a strut to the roof.

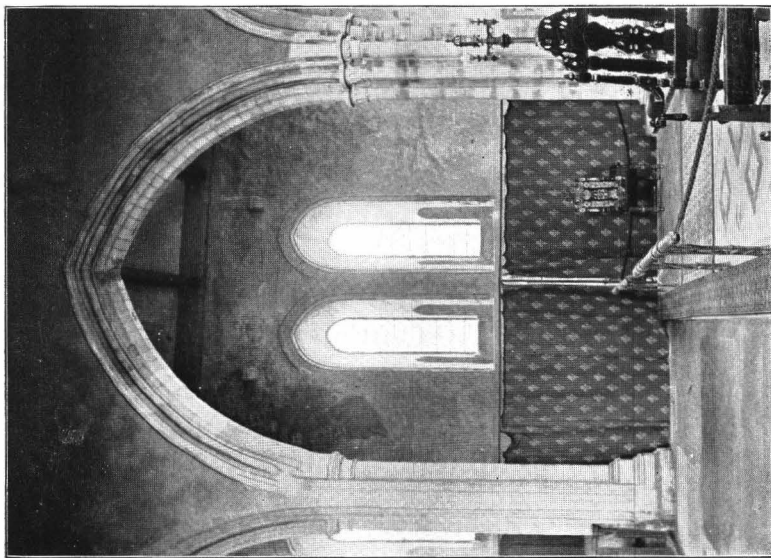
#### THE CHANCEL.

There are no indications of how the rood loft was arranged. I am inclined to think that there were continuous screens across the arches at the transepts and crossing with the loft above, access being obtained from the north wall of the chancel aisle.<sup>11</sup>

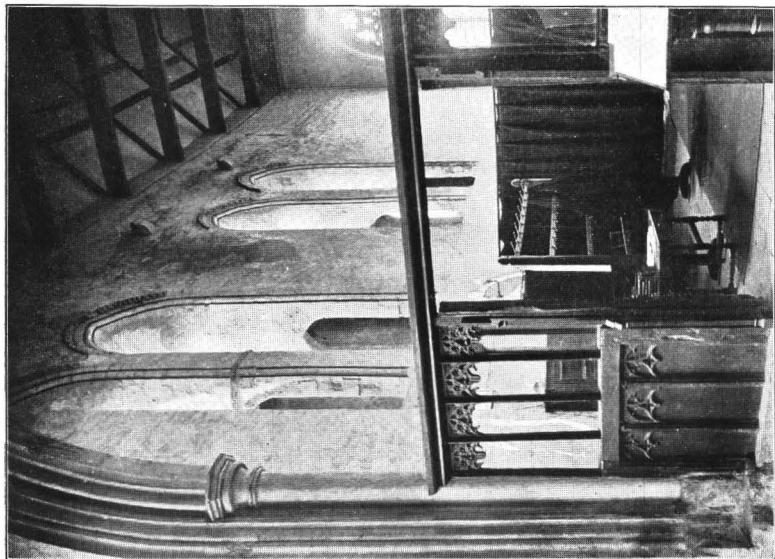
The chancel consists of three bays (see Plate 5). The two eastern arches and the eastern pier and respond on the north side are Early English. The respond is restored.<sup>12</sup> The pier has had to be rebuilt lately, as it was ruinous and badly restored. The reason for the Caen stone in the new work is, I believe, because the Fire stone, originally employed, could not be obtained. This pier is seen on right in No. 9. The capitals are carved with foliage of the stiff-leaf variety, à crochet, and recall French work. The abacus is very similar in

<sup>11</sup> The remains of the central screen were used to panel the south porch. Nothing now remains of this. *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> Probably here was the "run of brickwork." *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 128.



WINDOWS AND ARCADE, NORTH AISLE OF CHANCEL.



NORTH AISLE OF CHANCEL FROM TRANSEPT.

RYE CHURCH.

section to those in the nave, and the base shows a variety of the Early English water-holding moulding. The eastern arch is almost four centred now, owing to the distortion caused by the east wall having been pushed out before the flying buttresses were built. No. 9 shows the central arch and the junction on the left with the later pier.

The Early English pier seems intended to carry a vaulted roof.

The western pier on the north side, seen in No. 9, is of Perpendicular date of sandstone differing in this respect from the piers on the south side in the same style, but the work is the same. The western arch is also Perpendicular and it was possibly intended to carry the new style on to the east.

The south arcade is Perpendicular in date, the stone being apparently Caen; the spacing follows the proportions of what no doubt existed in Early English times. This arcade is seen in Plate 5 and the mortices for the former side screens can be observed.

The floor of the chancel has been raised some 8-in. above the bases of the columns.

When the north-east pier was re-built some ancient flooring tiles were found, but not, I believe, in position. Two are to be seen in the church; one is encaustic,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -in. by  $4\frac{1}{2}$ -in. by  $\frac{5}{8}$ -in. thick, with interlacing ornament, which may possibly represent the arms of Etchingham *azure*, Fretty *argent*. The other tile is thicker and plainer.

The two round-headed aumbries of large size in the east wall are interesting, and they indicate also that the floor has been raised.

The fine six-light east window, as seen in Plate 4, is the inserted early Perpendicular one restored.

There is the late brass of Thomas Hamon, 1607, to be seen at the extreme east end.<sup>13</sup>

The low stone screens on north and south in the east bays of the arcades are modern.

<sup>13</sup> Engraved. *S.A.C.*, Vol. XIII., p. 280.

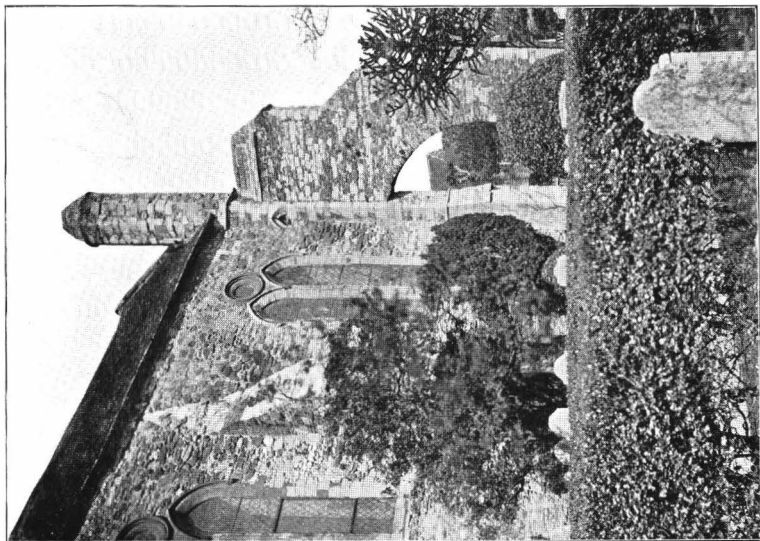
## NORTH CHANCEL AISLE.

The northern respond of the arch leading into the north aisle of the chancel from the transept shows a curious change of idea in the base. The west side can be seen in No. 8. A pyramidal stop and hollow moulding is seen which terminates nothing, but has above it the large double ogee of the jamb worked on separate stones. The stop appears to be on the same stone as the base. This is octagonal and not like those elsewhere, while the double ogee is, like the rest of the work, of Perpendicular date.

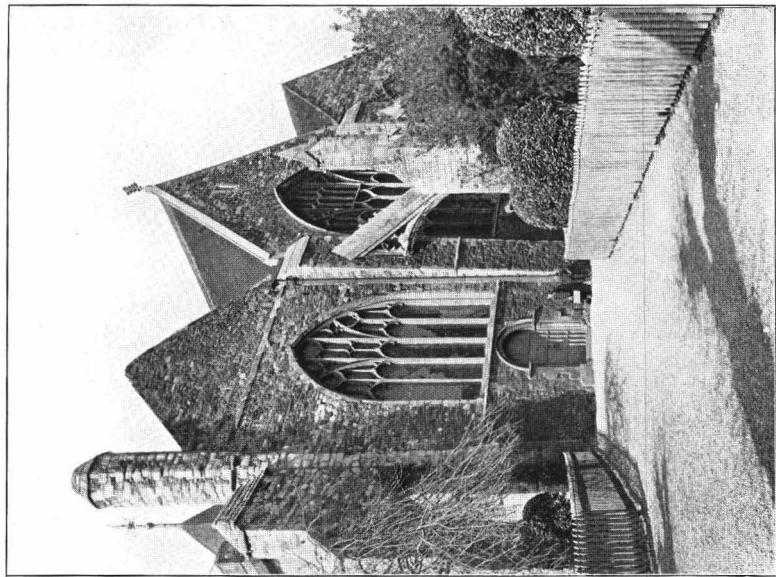
I think it was first intended to have the stop and the hollow moulding above and that the idea was changed and the double ogee employed. The alternative suggestion would be that this part of the church was damaged at two different times and the base is all that remains of the first re-construction.

At the north side of the arch of entrance into this transept is an internal buttress, and outside the wall here is a large buttress which occupies the angle of the transept and chancel aisle; possibly there was a staircase here for access to the passages in the walls. The built-up opening from that at the aisle windows can be seen. These passages are even more unusual than in the clerestory in a building of this size.

As before mentioned, this aisle is in the Early English style. Illustration No. 8 should be examined. The coupled lancet windows recall those in the nave aisle at Fécamp. They are very beautiful and show by their grouping that the builders were feeling after the idea of a window with mullions (see No. 9), the next step being seen in the windows of the south aisle, as will be mentioned later (see No. 11). The dog-tooth ornament occurs in the hood moulds, but it is not of the fully developed Early English kind, which is so often placed over a deep hollow. The hood mouldings of each pair of windows were probably connected by some mouldings or sculpture at the springing.



SOUTH AISLE OF CHANCEL FROM S.W.



EAST END FROM SOUTH-EAST.

RYE CHURCH.

The small north door appears to be original, the semi-circular arch being a relieving arch of the same date as the flatter arch.

There was no doubt a third group of two lancets to the east, as traces are to be seen of the western jamb. The angle of the church here appears to have been re-constructed at a later date when the heavy angle-buttress was built. Old materials are worked in on the outside. The window passage evidently was not re-built when this was done.

Corbels, which formerly carried the roof, are to be seen.

The window at the east wall of this aisle is a restoration, I believe, of a Decorated one that was inserted here. The arch and part of the jambs are original. It is of five lights, the central design of the tracery consisting of a seven foil circle surrounded with seven quadrifolds, which is somewhat unusual. Part of it can be seen in No. 8.<sup>14</sup>

In the east wall outside are traces of a modern doorway, which was used for the fire engine, as this aisle has been put to various secular uses; such as, I understand, for a casual ward, a butcher's shop, the fire engine house and depository for the town stocks and pillory, and it has no doubt suffered in consequence.

The arcade to the chancel bears traces of the screens formerly fixed here.

In the north wall, I am told, numerous groups of human bones were found and were built up again. I wish there was some record of this by stones placed in the wall.

There is a mutilated brass of a man and wife and seven children. The lady wears what appears to be the butterfly head-dress, which would date it as about 1480.

The Communion Table in this aisle is a very good specimen of wood carving and may possibly be Spanish.

<sup>14</sup> The old window was not so deep. *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 129. I have since had sent me by Mr. J. C. Stenning a photograph of a sketch by Rowe about 1830. There is no north gable with large window shown, but what seems to be a hipped roof at a lower level.



It would seem to have been made in the reign of William III. or of Queen Anne.

#### SOUTH CHANCEL AISLE.

The south aisle of the chancel has three double lancet windows of good size, with circles in the heads, after the manner of Plate tracery, as can be seen in No. 11. These windows are like those in the clerestory of the nave of Fécamp Abbey. The mouldings are fully developed Early English.

A passage runs across at about the sill level; the splays of the sills have evidently been altered. The passage shows that at the east end it continued across where the large window is now.

This window and the opening to the passage can be seen in No. 14.

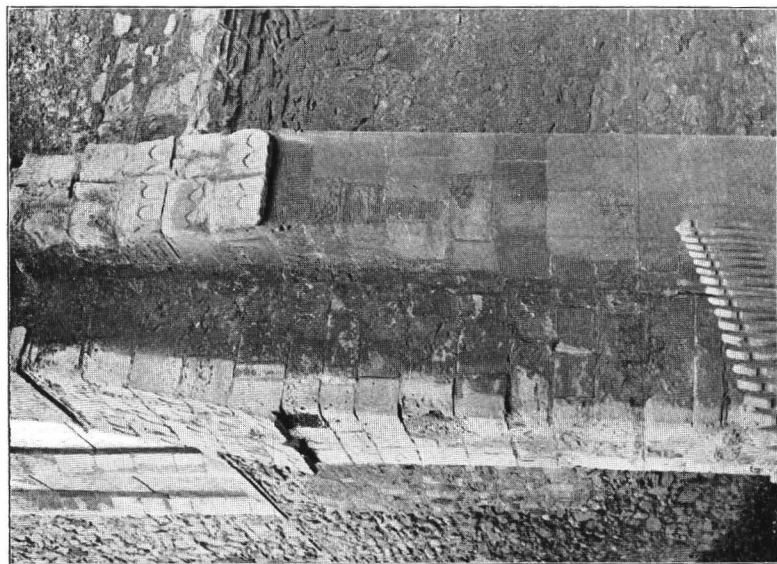
The most westerly of the three side windows seems to have been all restored in modern times, as an old print shows that the original window had gone and probably that a wooden one had been substituted. The relieving arch is, I think, the original one.

The south wall has been pushed out a great deal, probably before the buttresses were as heavy as they are now.

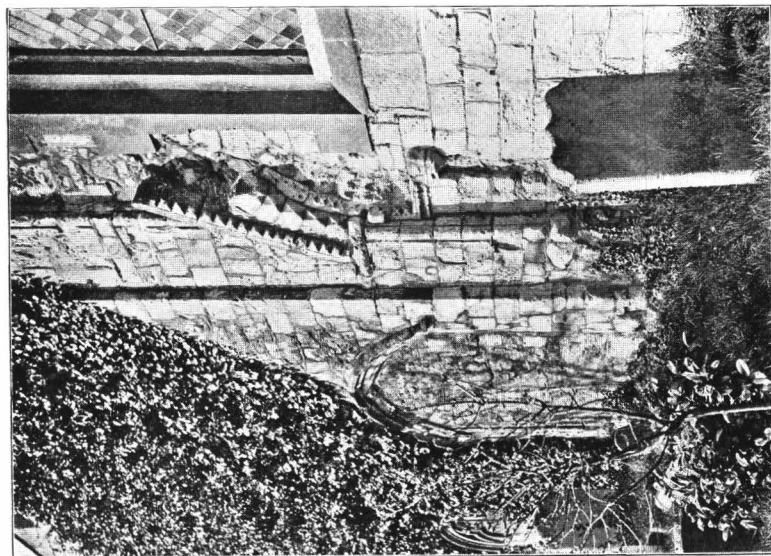
Next to the transept are traces externally of a small doorway with holy water stoup.

At the south-east angle, inside the aisle, as seen in No. 14, are the remains of a string-course and corbel which formerly carried a shaft, the capital of which, decorated with Early English foliage like the north-east pier of the chancel, remains.

Above the capital is what appears like a hollow moulded vertical rib, and higher up on the east wall are traces of the springing of a wall arcade. This is probably all that is left of some early design for the treatment of the east wall. The angle here is also most interesting externally, as stated later.



BUTRESSES AT S.E. ANGLE OF CHANCEL AISLE.



DOORWAY AT END OF SOUTH TRANSEPT.

RYE CHURCH.

The eastern door in this aisle is no doubt modern, and the window above it is the inserted Early Perpendicular one restored.<sup>15</sup>

The arms of Queen Anne can be seen on the south wall.

There is a tradition that this aisle was used by the Huguenots when they came in 1572. It has also been used as a national school and for other purposes, and has suffered in consequence.

#### EXTERIOR.

Leaving the interior of the church by the east door of the south aisle of the chancel, the east end should be examined and illustrations Nos. 10 and 15 should be consulted.

The shallow Norman buttresses are seen opposite the arcades and the lower parts of the two smaller ones between them under the great Perpendicular inserted window. The large buttresses lean over a good deal and the tops have been restored with a steeper pitch, as seen in a photograph taken in 1875.

The Norman double chamfered string can be seen at each side of the east window.

The Early Perpendicular flying buttresses are great features of the church. The Early English arcades had pushed the east wall out, as the Norman buttresses could not have been intended to take the thrust. It is seldom that flying buttresses are found in this position springing from piers direct from the ground. No doubt lightness of effect to the great east window was aimed at and also possibly the pathway round the church was felt necessary. The north buttress has been re-built. A photograph taken 30 years ago shows it as then missing.<sup>16</sup>

The east window of the south aisle is not in the centre of the gable. There is a corbel above it and the gable wall sets back.

<sup>15</sup> In the sketch by Rowe, mentioned in a former note, a rough modern east door is seen and a small one between it and the flying buttress. A large blocked-up window is seen, but it looks too rough for old work.

<sup>16</sup> The pinnacle of the old buttress is restored. *S.A.C.*, Vol. XXII., p. 132.

The buttresses at the south-east angle of the church, seen in No. 13, show strong French influence, the weatherings being especially noticeable with their steep pitch ornamented with imbrications or shingle carving. The buttresses of the nave of Fécamp Abbey are treated in a similar manner. The turret above is an interesting octagonal one brought out on small squinches from the square buttress below. This can be seen in No. 11.

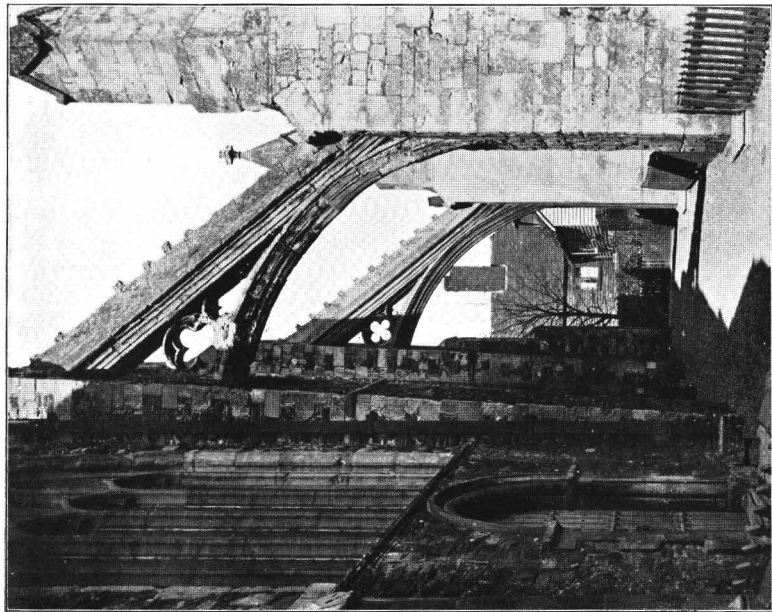
The large angle flying buttress is of late date and bricks are largely used in the arch. There are bricks in other parts of the church, some being of evidently Tudor date.

The south wall shows the lancets with circles above, with separate hood moulds, which prove the early date (see No. 11). They have all been restored in parts with Roman cement, and there are traces of built up openings, probably modern, under the windows. The arch over the window to the west appears to be the original relieving arch, although the window is restored, as before stated.

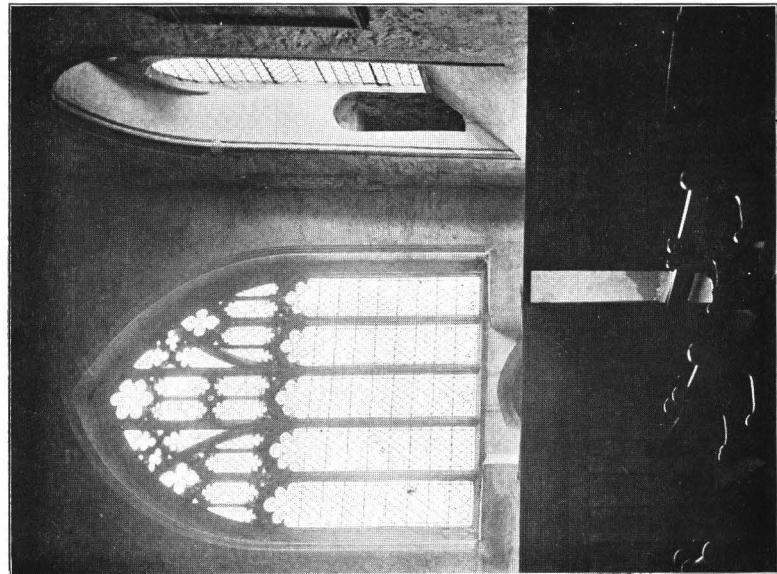
The two buttresses of great size have evidently been added to by building beyond the original buttresses of ashlar work. These probably partook of the nature of the angle ones and were, I consider, finished at the tops with gable weatherings, the ridges being at right angles to the wall. There are clear traces of this over the most easterly of the two. I have examined the wall here—where a triangle can be made out—and find the filling-in stones of the triangle to be different to the rest. The triangle leaves room for the projecting gabled weatherings. It can be seen in No. 11. The piers of the flying buttresses of the nave at Fécamp have weatherings also at right angles to the wall.

Next to the transept in the aisle wall are traces of the small doorway with the remains of the stoup at the left side, in the angle, as before described.

The south wall here was possibly finished originally with a parapet and corbel table and an old print shows a parapet.



BUTRESSES AT EAST END FROM SOUTH.



S.E. ANGLE OF S. AISLE, CHANCEL.

The south end of the transept shows the very interesting features mentioned earlier and seen in No. 12—a late Norman doorway, part of the west jamb of which remains with enriched arch and start of a pendiment close to the west angle.

The large east buttress of the transept has been built in front of the Norman one, and the old angle bowtell of the flat buttress is visible, projecting about 7-in., like the small central buttress under the later south window.

Passing west, we come to the outside of the south porch and chamber next the transept, and note the built-up door and quadrifoil window, close to which is a bracket of uncertain use.

On the west side of the chamber we see the built-up circular window of the upper chamber.

Between the wall and the south-west porch is the projecting piece of masonry, which may have been the base of a staircase to the upper chamber.

A good view of the tower can be had from here, and the buttresses to the north and south only can be noted, together with the Perpendicular windows and parapets, the latter set forward over the string. The parapet on the nave aisle is a restoration.

The tower can be seen in Plate 3. The initials A. R., with the date 1703, are on the vane.

At the west front the heavy buttresses and Early English pinnacles—now restored—are to be noted.

The restored Decorated west window should be examined; the jambs and hood mould terminations of a King and Queen appear original.

On the north side of the nave aisle the traces of the built-up north door are to be seen.

The porch in the angle of the north transept shows late Perpendicular work, with squared flints and stone bands. There is a fifteenth century seat-end from a former pew on the stairs to the belfry.

The Early English turrets to the north transept should be noted, together with the earlier flat buttresses and other features before described.

The rubble work in the north aisle of the chancel was probably originally plastered.

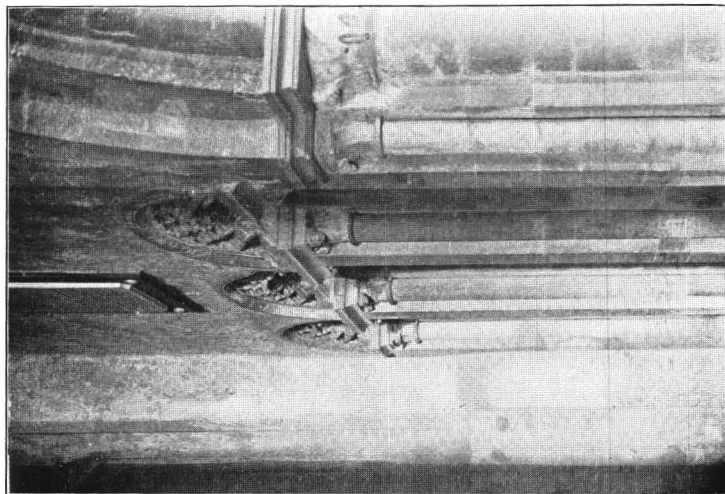
The Georgian clock face on the tower, with the gilt quarter boys, is a most interesting and ornamental feature.

I must conclude by expressing my thanks to Mr. C. H. Stenning and other gentlemen of Rye, who have kindly assisted me in the above description, to Mr. J. C. Stenning for his series of photographs and to Mr. A. E. Richardson for the drawings.

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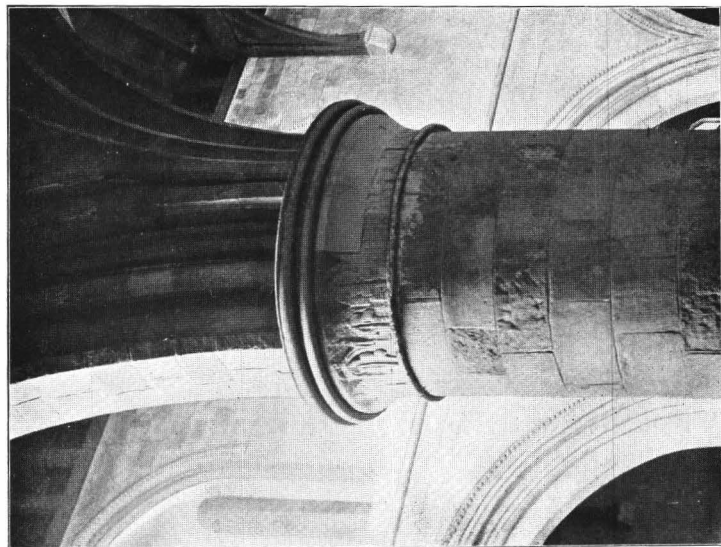
Plate 11.

No. 17.



WALL ARCADE, SOUTH TRANSEPT.

No. 16.



CAPITAL OF COLUMN, S.W. OF NAVE.

RYE CHURCH.