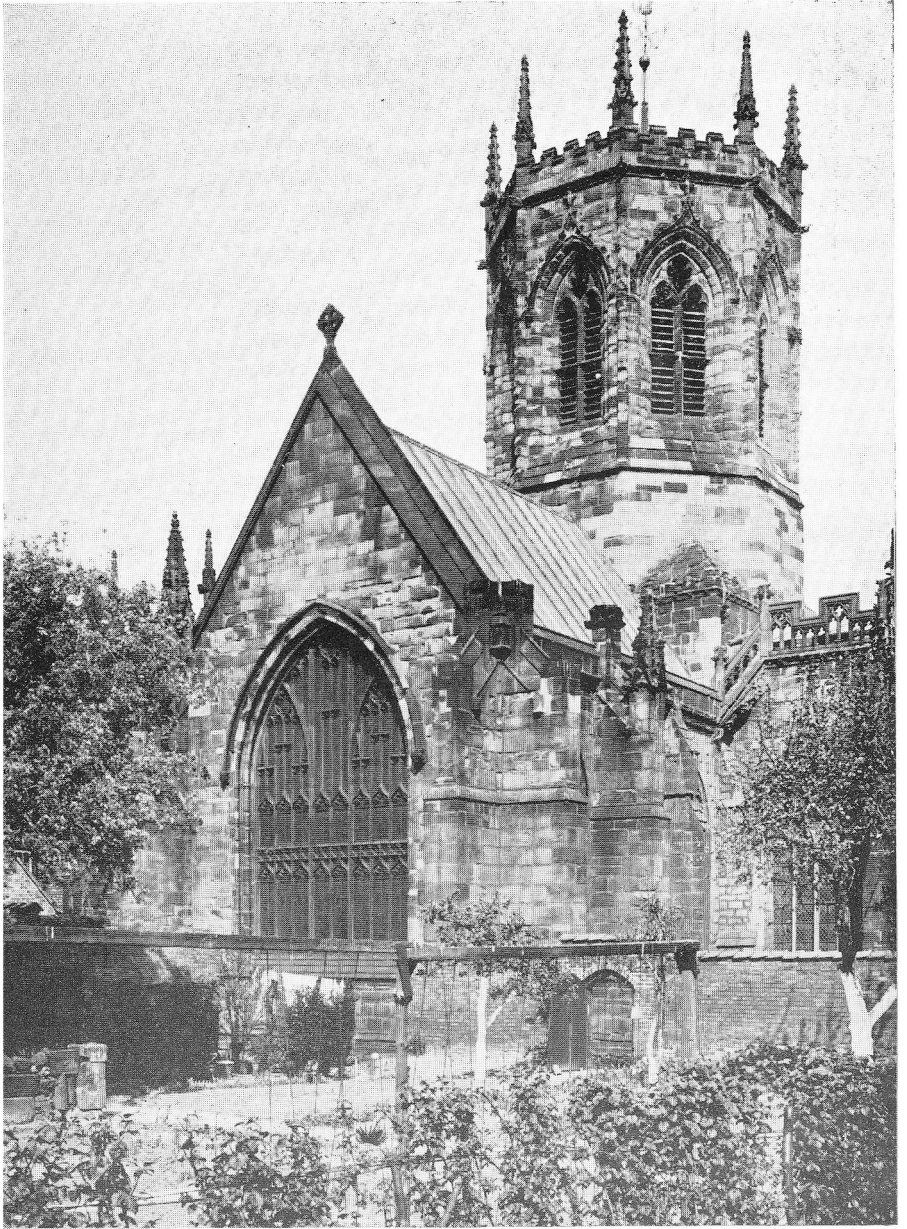




*Frontispiece.*



Cheshire Nantwich from the south east



## Fourteenth Century Steeple Building

BY FRED H. CROSSLEY, F.S.A.

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THE first half of the 14th century produced splendidly ornate fabrics ingeniously enriched, especially the greater churches many of which still adorn our countryside. In certain districts materials and wealth combined to give the masons the opportunity to expand their gifts by practice; the Yorkshire school produced a virile and effective type which spread into Nottinghamshire and Lincoln. The fine oolites of the Nene valley were also productive of much excellent 14th century masoncraft. Other districts however were not so fortunate, especially those distant from the arteries of commerce, their architectural work being of a more commonplace order. This applies to the north-west of England which remained unaffected by the prosperity of mediæval times, and had in fact to wait until the 19th century for position and wealth. There is a strong contrast, however, between 14th and 19th century prosperity; the first enriched and adorned the land, whereas the industrial revolution destroyed its natural beauties, giving in return desolated valleys, filthy rivers, and a smoke-laden atmosphere full of chemical fumes and soot.

Fourteenth century architecture in Cheshire and surrounding districts was a late development, and might easily be mistaken for work fifty years earlier than its actual date. Roger de Swettenham as late as 1366 left money towards the completion of the campanile at Astbury, whereas its style suggests the close of the 13th century. Again, Sir Hugh Calveley was granted the king's per-

mission to found a college at Bunbury for a master and six chaplains, March, 1386, and in June of the same year a warrant was issued to John Done, keeper of the forest of Delamere for scaffold poles to carry on the work. The chancel, which would be the first portion to be undertaken, shows a style in use before the Black Death in 1340. When we remember that the quire of St. Augustine at Bristol was built between 1306 and 1332, the south transept at Gloucester remodelled 1329 to 1337 and the quire vaulted by 1360, we realise how backward outlying districts could be. During this period building in Cheshire shows little imagination, and certainly none of the initiative and prescience of design exhibited in the later 15th century re-buildings; it is none the less of interest and demonstrates mediæval working methods. Rubble walling is rare indeed owing to the ease with which large blocks of soft red sandstone could be quarried near the different sites, the masonry ashlar faced both within and without; this class of walling could be re-used when a later re-modelling took place, even to the mouldings, thereby saving both time and costs; this procedure however now often makes it difficult to distinguish between the work of one period and another. When, in the 15th or early 16th centuries, a more imposing tower was required, the existing tower arch was often re-modelled, heightened, and supplied with caps and bases in keeping with the later style, the arches, however, retaining their earlier wave mouldings. This may be noted at Chester St. Mary, Great Budworth, Tarvin, Wybunbury and Backford, or perhaps the arch was left complete, as at Witton.

Fourteenth century building in Cheshire does not seem to have been influenced by the erection at Vale Royal of the greatest Cistercian church in the country. This was established in a remote and reputed evil neighbourhood, and from the first seems to have generated antagonistic feelings, and was therefore never popular. Many masons were employed there who no doubt drifted on to local work, but rarely under the direction of a master mind. Perhaps

Nantwich should be exempted, for it is the finest of the county churches; before restoration it showed 13th century influence at the west end and 15th century at the east, suggesting a slow and protracted building campaign. The same may be said of the nave of Great Budworth, the north arcade starting from the east is 14th century, as it travels to the west and returns along the south it finishes fully fledged 15th century.

The methods employed in constructing a village church are obscure. We have a little information as to some of the greater buildings, especially those under royal patronage. These were placed under a master-mason, responsible both for their design and construction, who was also responsible for the craftsmen, choosing and dismissing them in accordance with their ability. He was sometimes associated with the sacrist in the distribution of the funds and the wages which were paid in advance. The masons were provided with tools. If they brought their own, these were bought from them and repurchased by them on completing their job. Fourteenth century masons, owing to their occupation were not combined in guilds as other craftsmen, for they led a rather nomadic existence in search of work. With the exception of monasteries, churches, and castles, the majority of houses and other buildings were of timber and offered no permanent work for resident masons with yards of their own. They lived principally in the country on small holdings or farms, where the family worked and to which they returned for the winter or during scarcity of masoncraft; they were therefore at liberty to choose their own jobs and settle their own prices, whether wage or piecework; they often travelled in their own carts, generally in company for security against marauders, staying perhaps six months at a job and then moving on to another.

The accounts for the first three years at Vale Royal, 1278-1280, show this clearly, for they include names of over 150 masons during this time who came from every corner of England where monasteries and cathedrals were being built,

this list containing hardly any local names at all. Under such circumstances local characteristics which later were pronounced show little influence upon the work executed. Of who was responsible for the design and lay-out of the parish churches there is apparently no clue, but with the exception of Nantwich, Bunbury and Malpas they seem to have been haphazard and piecemeal. We do know however that the majority of these churches were appropriated to various monasteries to which they owed nothing whatever except a cramping of their revenues and often the lack of a really responsible priest to look after their welfare. The only portion of a church for which a convent was responsible was the chancel, and this is often the poorest part of the fabric, as at Audlem, where the monastery of St. Thomas, Stafford, in the late 15th century refused to join hands with the parishioners when they remodelled their church.

We can therefore only surmise as to procedure. It would no doubt be noised abroad that a parish church was to be enlarged. Masons would turn up and make their own bargains with the parish committee, who would appoint the best mason as the master, and a trusted local treasurer to superintend the work on behalf of the donor or parishioners. Alternatively a gang of masons may have travelled from one job to another. Owing to drastic restoration, refacing and rebuilding undertaken during the 19th century it is now only with the greatest difficulty that the movements of these masons can be followed. Masons marks which should play an important part in this discovery are not very reliable, for the number of marks are limited and were the same from one generation to another. We do not know exactly how they were employed, whether for personal work done, or to assist the wallers when on construction. The use of the same mark upon two different buildings is no criterion that it refers to the same workman.

Materials and transport in Cheshire offered no great difficulties, for in the majority of cases suitable stone could be quarried close to the site and thereby save the cost of

transport, for water carriage could not in any case have played an important part in the county, owing to the lack of adequate waterways where most needed for building. Mediæval quarries were small and whenever possible the side of a hill or outcrop was used, for there were no methods in mediæval times for draining a deep sinking except by means of buckets, which precluded deep cutting. Further a quarry was often worked individually and not as a whole as is still the custom at the Purbeck quarries at Corfe. This is shown in the Vale Royal accounts where in several instances a man and his servant were paid for working his own bit of quarry on the side of Edisbury hill. There was also the question of either constructing a road, or of keeping one in repair during the time of building operations, for the majority of roads in the 14th century were earth trackways. In the wardens accounts for Bunbury in the 17th century are items for repairing the road to Peckforton quarry before the extensive rebuilding of the churchyard wall could be undertaken.

In the earlier periods of quarrying, the blocks of stone were as far as possible scappled to a uniform size, about the weight a man could carry on his shoulders; later however as working conditions improved this became unnecessary and the quarriers in splitting up the beds of rock cut stones of varying size without having to consider their uniformity. The wallers seem to have bedded the ashlar as it came straight from the quarry without taking any special care to lay it uniformly as to sizes. This method or as we should say lack of method has fortunately resulted in giving a diverse face to the walling, the plainest surfaces weathering to a richness of tone. In many restorations this quality has not been taken into account, especially in France, with the result that a wall restored in the modern monotonous manner is as far from the mediæval tradition and usage, as the modern imitation of Norman crudities chiselled to a fine edge, a juxtaposition of absurdities, a lesson to the mechanically minded, who would reduce everything to a dead level of a common denominator. The majority of

the towers under our consideration are built of sandstone, red, yellow or grey, some of it of good quality, some soft and full of pebbles subject to corrosion by frost and especially by chemical fumes and soot. Decay is also caused by not laying the stones upon their correct bed; this in mediæval times seems to have been a somewhat haphazard business and has often caused individual stones to disintegrate in an otherwise sound piece of masonry. Two exceptions to the use of sandstone are at Astbury and Leek where millstone has been used full of silica, which has stood sound and well. In our district the masonry of this period is usually close-jointed and well-bedded, the blocks of considerable size but unequal in dimensions, ashlar-faced inside as well as out, rubble being the exception.

The building era of the 12th century seems to have provided what was necessary for the parishes of Cheshire until the 14th century, for 13th century masonry is scarce: however there was certainly more of it before the 19th century restorers got into their stride and demolished valuable examples at Barthomley, Coddington, Daresbury and Runcorn. There still stand the arcades at Prestbury and Acton together with the lower half of the western tower at Acton which bears every appearance of having been built with earlier 12th century materials.

In the 14th century, especially during its second half, extensive building took place and the lay-out proved sufficiently spacious and well planned to fulfil all requirements down to the present day. The churches have broad naves, wide aisles, and in some instances are without architectural division betwixt nave and chancel as at Astbury, Chester St. Peter, and formerly at Thornton-le-Moors. At this time no doubt the average village church had to be content with a bell-cot as formerly at Thornton and Plemstall and still existing at Shocklach, but during this period at least twenty churches in Cheshire were provided with steeples, some of them of substantial and noble proportions as at Audlem, Bunbury and Malpas.



This was particularly the age of the stone spire. Northamptonshire and district provided the greater number, but many other counties had their share, including Derbyshire, which borders upon Cheshire to the south-east and where many stone spires were erected upon the small towers of village churches. Cheshire originally had several, but unfortunately they are now reduced to three in number: Bebington and Eastham of the broach type, and Astbury where the spire springs from within the parapet as it did until recently in the destroyed church at Aldford. Others have been rebuilt or otherwise falsified, as at Chester Holy Trinity, and Davenham. Formerly there were spires at Chester St. Peter, Neston, Farn-don and Malpas and possibly in other places. The spire habit is found along the northern boundary of Cheshire in Lancashire, as at Sephton and Winwick, and later in Aughton, Halsall, Ormskirk, and Standish, and formerly at Childwall, where the spire has been rebuilt. With the exception of Childwall the last four are of unusual design, rising from octagonal belfries standing upon square towers, chamfered at the corners to meet them. There is an excellent centrally placed octagon designed for a spire at Nantwich; a similar example rebuilt at Bakewell in Derbyshire; in Staffordshire one at Stafford St. Mary which has lost its spire, and in Shropshire a 15th century example at Tong with a short spire. Hodnet, however, in the same county has an important tower designed as an octagon from its base upwards and placed at the west end of the church.

Few of the 14th century towers in Cheshire are complete, but all retain their original planning and afford evidence as to the shape and construction of the 14th century steeple in the north-west. In setting out, the dimensions of towers vary from 18 to 34 feet square on plan, the average is somewhere about 20 feet, as the average height is about 60 feet; the thickness of the walling five feet from the ground is from 42 to 72 inches but usually 48 to 54. Buttresses connected with towers were

designed in several ways, but usually placed at the corners, either diagonally or four-square that is facing each way. In quite a number of cases Bunbury, Farndon and Frodsham for example, the eastern side of a tower had no buttresses, the abutment of the nave being considered sufficient. In our district neither clamp nor octagonal forms were employed during the 14th century, but a certain variety of shape and position was secured by differences in projection, height and the number and type of the off-sets.

Diagonal or angle buttresses are usually found on the western half of a tower; in only one instance are they used to all four corners and that is at Eastham. The eastern half had four-square as at Bebington and Sephton, or had strong abutments to the north and south as at Heswall and Woodchurch where the eastern side is left blank. This gives a lopsided character to the tower which from certain points of view is unfortunate. The four-square form of which there are nine examples can give much dignity to a tower if well proportioned as at Mucklestone; at Leek however they are too weak and skimpy to be effective and do much to mar an otherwise excellent design. In four-square buttressing the admirable mode of allowing the corners of the tower to appear between, was not made the feature it became in the later towers of the south-west. At Halsall however they do show through for nine inches, but as at each string the walling is set back a little, the corner disappears before the buttresses are completed about two-thirds of the way up the tower. This gives the elaborate base mouldings the opportunity of turning nine angles at each corner with rather showy effect.

The proportions, height and off-sets have much to do with the excellence of the general outline of a steeple. At Astbury where the buttresses finish at the level of the belfry floor they cut the tower in half and break up the line. To gain in appearance the buttress should be carried up almost to the parapet as at Eastham giving a good

silhouette to the structure. Another consideration is the number, form and position of the off-sets especially in conjunction with the strings. Four or five off-sets are usually sufficient; if they are multiplied as at Woodchurch they become ladderlike and ridiculous, if in reverse that is too few, they prevent the eye from travelling easily up the tower. The common form of off-set is a straight slope projecting a little at its base to throw off the weather; a long slope is sometimes successful as at Eastham and Ormskirk. The gabled form, general with the Yorkshire masons at this time is seldom used and then not always intelligently. At Winwick it is placed as the lowest off-set with no connection with what follows; at Eastham it is used as a link between a long rake and the tower; at Halsall however it is used as it should be as the commencement of a gabled slope which completes the buttress. The gable appears in the fabric buttressing at Nantwich, and a little later at Acton and Malpas but not upon the buttresses of the towers. The buttresses at Woodchurch which project ten feet were remodelled in 1675 with 14 off-sets. Evidently it was thought that by this means the tower could be made secure. The really important point of a buttress is its foundation, if this is not firm and solid it turns what should be a support into an added danger. Buttresses should be bonded well into the fabric and not placed against the wall as an afterthought as they are at Leek.

Strings like buttresses are varied in character, they may be ornamental or used as a means of reducing the thickness of the walling as at Halsall. When intended for this purpose the slope of the top is greater than that of the moulding below. Another form used for the same purpose is a batter or slope without mouldings as at Neston, Sephton and Winwick; this form if not carefully contrived breaks the line obtrusively, especially if not masked by buttressing. The full slope of an off-set is sometimes carried round the sides of a buttress as at Overton-on-Dee; this is unpleasant to the eye but enables

a thinning down of the buttress, or it may be carried round the tower as at Eastham for the same purpose. Until then, 15th century strings were not crowded upon towers. The examples at Farndon, Frodsham and Overton-on-Dee are without, and there is only one string beneath the belfry windows at Audlem, Bebington and Woodchurch or above it at Malpas. When a string is placed beneath the cill of the west window as at Bebington, Eastham, Holt and Malpas it is seldom continued round the tower. Strings are occasionally taken round the buttressing, when this is so it is usually contrived to occur at the base of an off-set as at Audlem, Eastham and Holt. Strings of this period are of simple form, the deep cavetto enriched with patera belongs to the 15th century and after. Too many strings retard the apparent growth of a tower, each horizontal line catching the eye; the more successful towers are those in which vertical lines predominate.

Base mouldings in the earlier part of the 14th century consisted of one or two straight splays, single at Neston, double at Hodnet and Leek. The top splay sometimes projected with a nosing to act as a protection from the weather as at Eastham, Holt, Farndon and Malpas. A variation was a slightly hollowed chamfer at Farnworth, Hale and Overton-on-Dee, and in the later stages the ogee form at Audlem and Heswall. The towers at Aughton, Halsall and Ormskirk however offer a richer combination of all three types four feet in depth and of handsome appearance. At Winwick the diagonal buttresses have an additional ogee member to the moulding round the walls; in all cases the base mouldings are continued round the buttresses.

It is in the parapets that time, restoration and rebuilding have played a drastic part and what we now see is rarely what was originally designed. Neston, Winwick and Nantwich are modern, the last wrongly designed as is Overton-on-Dee; both Mucklestone and Farndon are post-reformation, the first 16th, the second 17th century, and Frodsham is late 15th or early 16th. Stafford St. Mary is

now quite different from what it was before the 19th century restoration. The type in use in the earlier part of the 14th century was a plain solid parapet slightly oversailing the walling beneath and completed by a projecting slope on the outside and a chamfer within. This type may be seen at Astbury, Aughton, Halsall, Ormskirk, Sephton and at Aldford before its destruction. The later type was battlemented with the local peculiarity that the moulding was continued round the sides of the merlons as well as the tops and those of the embrasures, forming a continuous projecting slope, a most pleasing version. When this type came into use is a little difficult to say but it is one of the characteristics of the 15th and 16th century building in this district. In both cases gargoyles are used, in the earlier they are often small and central; later they were large and at the corners as well, numbering eight to a tower.

The sections of mouldings in use during this period are three, the chamfer, the wave and the hollow and round. The rings or members of tower arches are generally chamfered and divided by quirks as in the well-proportioned arches at Gresford and Sephton, and when in triplicate achieve a pleasant patterning. The hollow and round appears in profusion upon the piers and arches of the engaged tower at Bunbury and the central crossing at Nantwich. This elaboration of light and shade is a beautiful and graceful embellishment. The wave in combination with chamfers and quirks may be seen on the tower arches at Great Budworth, Chester St. Mary, Hodnet, Halsall, Malpas and Winwick. In the arches of this period mouldings are often continued without a break from respond to arch, the caps omitted and the base mouldings insignificant. In seven instances the arches die into the walls without responds, for the arch is often nearly the same width as the interior of the tower; it often occurs that the inner mouldings die into the wall, the outer or nave mouldings splayed out beyond the width of the tower as at Hodnet. Plain arches without mouldings are at Audlem and with shallow broad chamfers at Bebington.

As the walls of a tower ascend they are usually thinned down to relieve the weight and to improve the appearance. This thinning may be done either externally or internally, the former for preference. If on the outside this is accomplished with the aid of string courses as at Halsall where it is hardly noticeable, or by batters which require more careful handling if they are to be successful. Another method is the imperceptible drawing-in of the walling as has been done in the new tower of Liverpool cathedral; this however requires more than ordinary acumen. At Bebington and Sephton the thinning takes place on the inner wall, each storey as the tower ascends being a foot or more in width. If the outside wall is left vertical and is above sixty feet in height it will look top-heavy, an optical illusion to be avoided if the design is to be successful. At Winwick, which is about sixty feet in height, the ground storey is 26 feet across, the top 23 feet 6 inches, each wall having lost 15 inches in its ascent; this indeed helps the apparent height of the tower in addition to relieving the stress.

Many 14th century steeples had no west doorway, its place taken by a two-light window as at Audlem, Bebington, Eastham and Halsall. At some later date after their erection, doorways have been supplied to the towers at Farndon, Frodsham, Hale, Malpas, Neston and Woodchurch. The towers however at Bunbury, Gresford, Holt, Leek, Overton-on-Dee and Winwick seem to have had doorways from the first. These original examples are enriched on the exterior by mouldings, usually two waves with a quirk between, rarely deeper than a foot, often only eight inches, and they gain in importance when surmounted by a weather mould terminating in label stops as at Overton-on-Dee. Unlike the preceding style the mouldings are often carried through from jamb to arch without a break, but in no instances are they imposing, or placed within decorated settings as in the 15th century examples at Tarvin and Wybunbury.

On the interior sides, doorways are usually constructed with a deep plain arch, the jambs either straight or slightly

splayed but rarely moulded. The arch is designed to meet certain conditions; if the window is immediately above, the arch is kept low, otherwise it may be acutely pointed or semi-circular as at Astbury. At Bunbury the doorway is enclosed within the splay of the window which is carried down to the ground, thereby lessening the thickness of the wall. Lesser doorways opening from the vice to the different chambers of a tower have either a pointed arch, a squared head or a shouldered lintel. The last is a 13th century form continued in the north-west into the 14th century. At Caernarvon Castle it was used profusely, so much so that it is sometimes designated a Caernarvon arch. If carefully designed and masoned it may be quite intriguing as the examples at Nantwich, Neston, Sephton, Halsall, Ormskirk and Aughton, especially when they are surrounded by a splay or a hollow moulding.

Windows are more difficult to judge, the original tracery, cut in soft sandstone, has often perished and has been renewed more than once and not always to the original design; during the 18th century many windows lost their fenestration and what we now see is 19th century surmise. In the 14th century the windows of a village church were of two-lights with a pointed head filled in with either a trefoil or a quatrefoil, and in west windows of towers framed in deeply splayed jambs and cills divided by quirks as at Audlem, Bebington and Eastham. Halsall is an exception in having square heads to the windows both to the west and belfry stage. Collegiate and important churches had more ornate windows; Bunbury has a three-light with reticulated tracery and Malpas a five-light flanked by niches. Belfry windows are commonly two-light, pointed, with a quatrefoil in the head. They are of three lights at Mucklestone and Woodchurch but these are exceptions as the dual two-light windows to each side at Leek and Stafford. There is variety of treatment, at Bebington the tracery is close to the exterior, at Astbury it is deeply recessed. About half the windows have weather moulds, the rest rely upon the constructional arch. Perhaps Nant-

wich has the finest belfry windows, both as to proportion, design and setting. Ringers chambers are lit by small oblong windows splayed outside, they may have either square or trefoiled heads and at Bebington they are shouldered; Malpas however is without.

Inside treatment of windows follows that of doorways with plain splays and cills, but sometimes the arch has chamfered members as at Bunbury. Belfry windows are usually rough and it is seldom that they are neatly masoned. At Aughton and Sephton although pointed outside they are shouldered within, as are several of the single lights in the ringers chambers. At Astbury they are treated in this way, the top slab to both windows being a 13th century incised grave slab. At Stafford the shouldering is carried the full length of the splay. At Eastham the ringers windows are pointed and recessed in three orders, very carefully done and most successful. The slit lights for the vice are primitive and may be placed either within or without the church or both; they are also anything from 6 to 30 inches through, often set at an acute angle.

Vices are general, either inside or more often bastioned out on the exterior face of the tower. Squared external vices are usually built in the south-east corner. There are six examples of them, the remaining three are in the north-east corner. They project a couple of feet and are from five to nine feet across the face, as at Farndon, Hale, Heswall, Holt, Overton-on-Dee, Winwick and Woodchurch, or if octagonal in the south-west corner as at Bunbury constructed first in the west wall of the south aisle continuing in bold octagon form to the ringers chamber where outside it is completed by a solid parapet and within by a charming little vault. Davenham had a somewhat similar arrangement but the vice rose to the full height of the tower; it is still more effective when carried up a little above the parapets as at Overton-on-Dee. When the vice is internal the south-west corner is the position generally chosen where nine out of fourteen are to be found. The least used corner is the north-west, only three are placed there out of twenty-



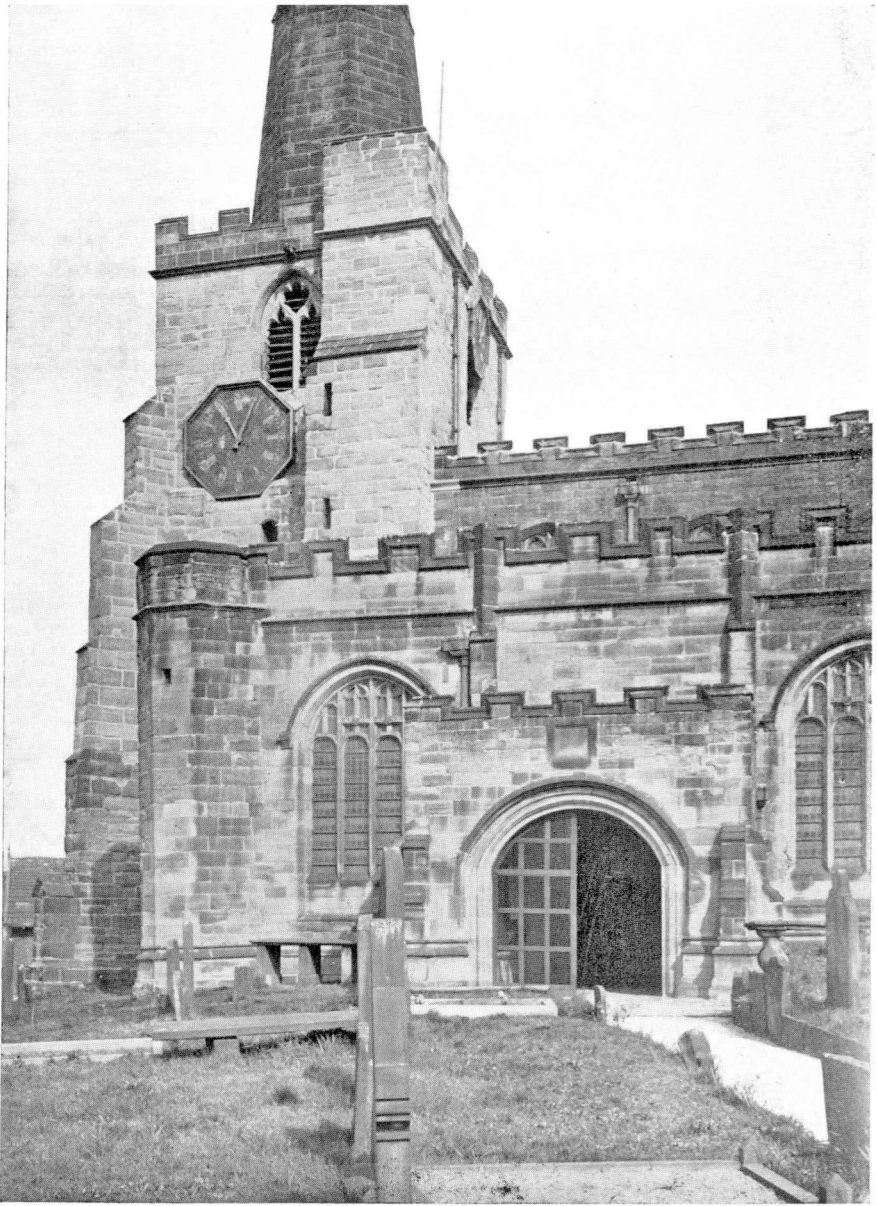
seven. Audlem and the destroyed towers of Aldford and Childwall were built without vices. They may be entered either from within or without, usually the former; double entrances are to be found at Malpas, Leek and formerly at Davenham; these were not original but insertions, the interior doorway at Malpas and the exterior one at Leek. At Astbury the stone vice does not start on the ground floor but at the first storey, but we have no example of this date where a vice changes corners part way up as it does at Wybunbury. Some only reach as far as the ringers chamber as Bebington and Halsall or the octagon belfry as at Aughton, Ormskirk and Stafford. The usual dimensions are from 54 to 60 ins. in diameter, the steps from 24 to 27 across, and 12 to 14 at the outside radius, varying in depth from 8 to 10 inches, the central column from 4 to 6 ins. in thickness.

Stone vaults are rare in Cheshire, there is one at Chester St. Peter and another at Malpas both with good sized wells for the lowering of the bells. The ribs at Malpas cross each other near their start in a curious manner; at Holt is a modern vault constructed without a well, so that when the bells require lowering, the window will be the only exit. All other towers have timber floors, the beams sometimes supported upon strong shaped stone corbels as at Aughton, Halsall and Winwick. The upper storeys of some towers are ill-kept and the belfries dirty from the ingress of birds. Belfries suffer from overcrowding in the endeavour to place eight bells in a space intended for three as at Farndon and Aughton. In this last example the steel bars of the frame are bedded into the masonry in a most reprehensive way without regard for the safety of the fabric. Bells require careful anchorage to prevent the sway and jar from gradually weakening the tower. For this purpose a wooden frame is the best for it absorbs part of the jolt. Serious harm is done by a steel frame anchored into the walls and acting as a conductor of vibration to the fabric. Bell founders are fond of this method for it takes less room and therefore more bells can be crowded in; it is also less troublesome

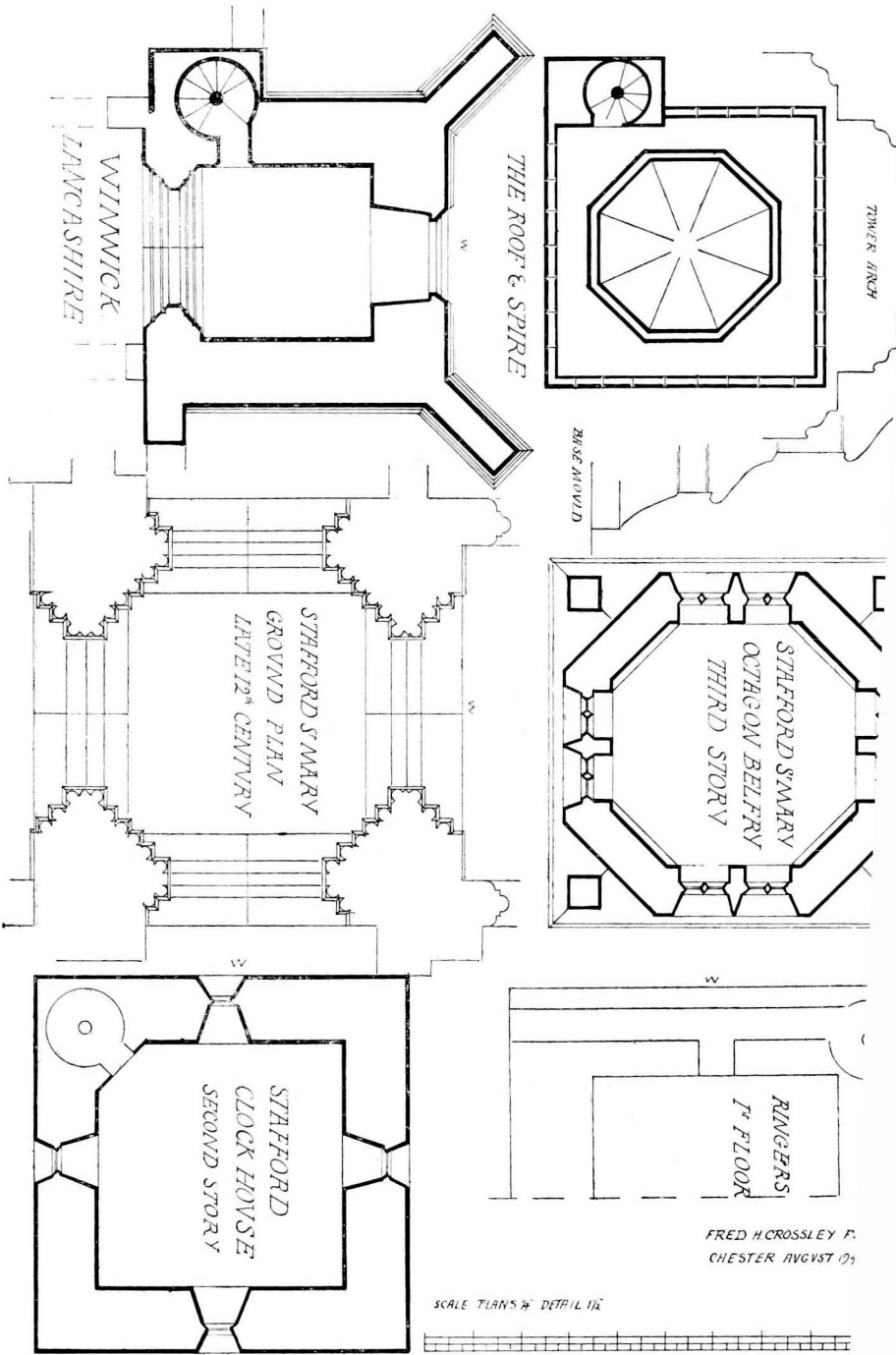
and costly to have a few iron bars in stock than to have to buy and keep oak until it is sufficiently dry and serviceable. Even the ground floor at times is a receptacle for unwanted furniture, and recently the tower at Woodchurch has been cluttered up with an organ.

The usual position of a tower is at the west end of the nave, when not placed centrally. Even then it may be enclosed, that is surrounded upon both sides by aisles which terminate at the level of the west face of the tower. When this occurs the tower stands upon three arches facing east, north and south, Bunbury, Chester St. Peter and formerly Davenham being of this type. Other positions are used; the original tower at Chester Holy Trinity was, and Bebington and Ormskirk are placed at the west end of the south aisle, while Audlem is at the west end of the north aisle. Aughton divides the north aisle of the chancel from that of the nave, and Astbury is almost detached from the church at its north-east corner. Nor are the ground levels uniform; at Holt there is a step down from the west doorway and two down into the nave; steps downwards are at Eastham, Halsall and Hodnet. At Winwick however the reverse takes place they are all up to the nave floor as they are at Farndon and Neston.

The spire had no forerunners in earlier ages and styles; it was evolved in the late 12th century from the pyramidal timber roofs of the Norman period and was in fact a stone copy of timber construction. The early designs are called broach spires, they completely cover the walls, slightly over-sailing them and effectively protecting them from the elements. In this type each corner of a square tower is covered by a right-angled roof which goes inwards and upwards until it meets the side of the octagonal spire. This corner is called a broach. It surmounts the difficulty of an awkward corner and protects the squinch beneath it; in early examples it is often plain or enriched with pinnacles or turrets as in the rather heavy examples at Eastham and Sephton. Before a spire could be erected certain structural additions were necessary at the top of the tower, for it was

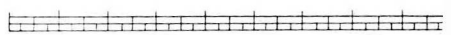


Lancashire Winwick from the south.



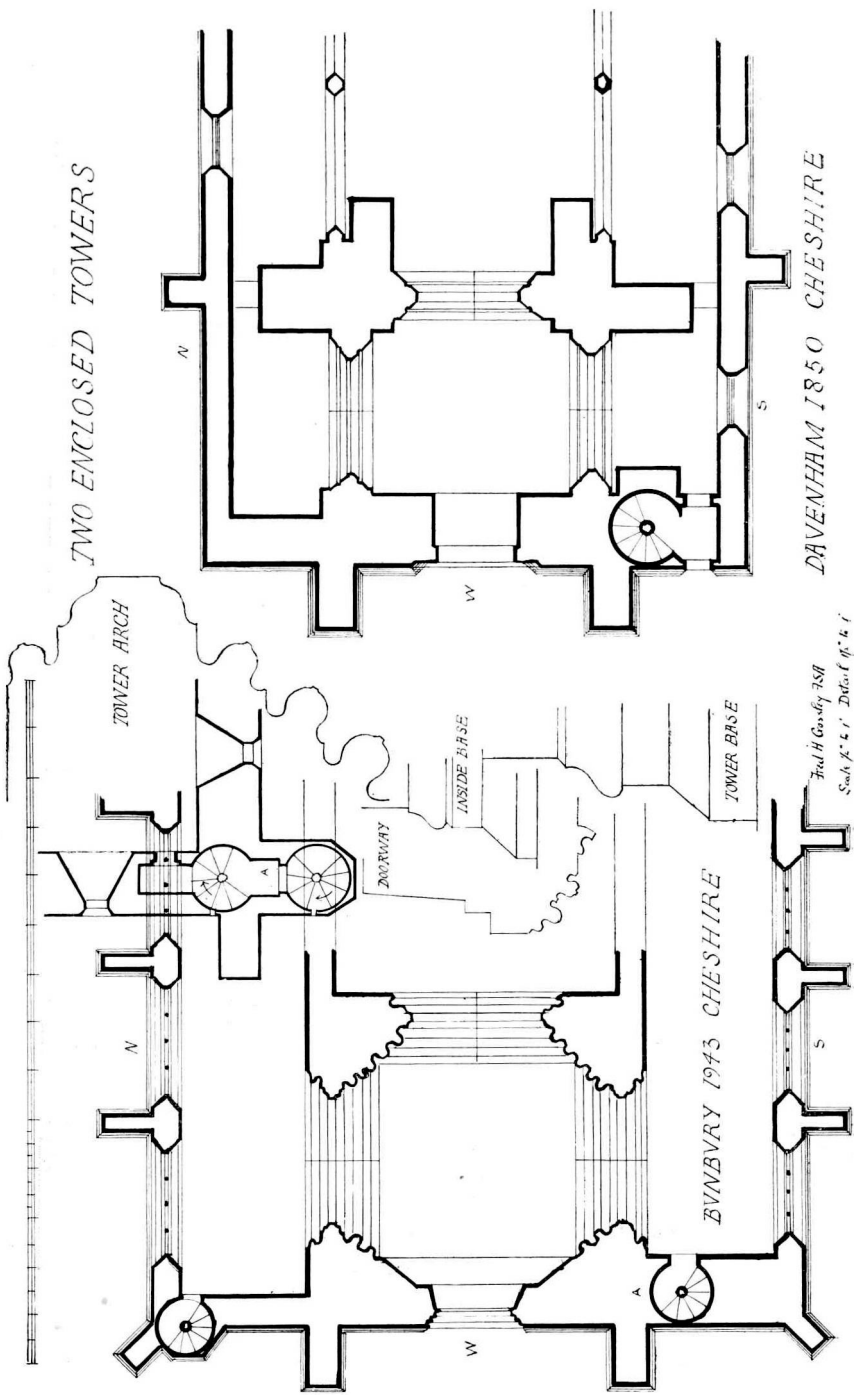
FRED H. CROSSLEY F.  
CHESTER AUGUST 1875

SCALE PLANS & DETAIL 1/4"





Audlem Cheshire, base of tower.



TWO ENCLOSED TOWERS

DAVENHAM 1850 CHESHIRE

BYNBRY 1945 CHESHIRE

From Gosely 78ff  
Scale 1/2" = 1' Dotted line 1/4" = 1'

not an easy task to place an octagon upon a square and provide support for the four sides which did not actually rest upon the walls. The usual method was to bridge over the top corners within, so as to form a solid base. This involved several forms of corbelling out and bridging over. The first exerted no thrust upon the outer walls, but the second did and care had to be taken that the pressure would not finally bulge out the corners of the tower. This filling in of the corners is called a squinch. At Malpas the angle is projected inwards with smooth masonry and completed at the octagon by a stone overhanging chamfered cornice. At Neston and Nantwich the corners are corbelled out in steps, each layer chamfered or rounded on its lower face. Halsall and Mucklestone are similar, except that both start from a small stone arch, which at Halsall is cut out of a single stone. The bridge or arch form is employed at Audlem, Eastham, Sephton and Winwick. The arch springs from both sides, the angle from two to three feet back; at Bebington the arch is supported in the corner at its apex by a stone corbel. Squinches are used both for the angles of a spire and the splays formed beneath an octagonal belfry.

In the early examples spires are rather short and obtuse, the stone shell of considerable thickness, at Eastham it is about 18 inches; later however the spire grew in height and in slenderness, and the weight of the stonework diminished. In construction a spire is built in horizontal beds and not with joints at right angles to the slope which would produce an outward thrust. The top portion is often constructed in the solid, weight having a steadying effect, it also provides a good foundation for the stem of the weather vane. A spire is generally divided into storeys by strings, with the addition of gabled spirelights both for light and decoration; usually each story is set on alternate sides. When a spire is left open to the belfry as at Bebington, Eastham and Ormskirk it presents an interesting vista. In all three examples it is difficult to say where the spire begins for there is no visible break in the masonry between tower and spire.

The broach spire is confined to England and is a perfectly logical development in construction, but the masons were not long content with it, they preferred elaborating the upper parts of the steeple in other ways. Perhaps the most successful was that of placing the spire within a parapet, thereby giving a footing round the spire for repairs and allowing for an added decoration of turrets, pinnacles and flying buttresses connecting the spire to the tower, occasionally making a rich pinnacled crown. This method however has the disadvantage of a guttering within the parapets, which if not kept in good repair is a constant source of trouble and decay, the wet percolating into the walls. In Cheshire, since the destruction of Aldford there is but one example of this type, namely at Astbury, an example entirely devoid of ornament. In Lancashire this type is found at Sephton and Winwick and was at Childwall before its destruction. Winwick is plain with a battlemented parapet, at Sephton the parapet is solid and there are four heavy turrets at the corners which do little to connect the spire to the tower. Possibly these date from the rebuilding of the spire in 1802. They are constructed of nine inch walling with a passage through each turret.

Unfortunately spires have delicate organisms subject to damage by tempest, lightning and neglect; few original ones survive. Davenham was first re-constructed in 1680, Eastham in 1751, Sephton in 1802, Bebington in 1805, Astbury in 1838, Halsall in 1852, Standish in 1867, and Ormskirk in recent years. During these rebuildings care has not always been taken to ensure continuity of the original design; some have been heightened, others enlarged as the tower at Standish. The history of St. Peter's, Chester, is a good instance of the trouble a spire may cause to those responsible for it. It was repaired in 1479, fourteen yards removed in 1579, eighteen yards rebuilt in 1580; the spire taken down in 1669 only to be rebuilt in 1762: it was struck by lightning and partly taken down in 1783, rebuilt in 1813, and since that date once more taken down.



The octagonal form for tower design has always been the exception and has therefore attracted more attention; although intriguing in itself it is rarely successful, perhaps the shearing off of the corners diminishes too much of its bulk to the eye. Few people at a casual glance would realise that the central octagonal tower at Nantwich measures thirty-four feet across, ten feet more than an average tower. This form of construction is not confined to any particular age or district; Ozleworth, in Gloucestershire, is of the 12th century, Tong, in Salop, of the 15th, and there are good examples of the 13th at Uffingham, Berks, and Stanwick, Northants, but the majority were built during the second half of the fourteenth century. If we exclude the round towers of East Anglia which in many cases were fitted in the 14th century with appropriate and beautiful octagonal belfries, there are probably not more than fifty examples in seventeen counties.

There are several types, the tower constructed octagonally from the ground; the octagonal belfry of one or two storeys placed upon a square tower, and the lantern perched upon the top of a campanile such as the west tower at Ely and Boston stump. Other methods include decorating the lowest section of the spire to resemble an octagon as at Patrington, Yorks, which is both an amusing and delightful whimsey. The first type built from the ground is generally too slender for the bulk of the church behind it as at Fifield and Coggs Oxon, but fine examples remain at Scanton and Coxwold, Yorks, and Hodnet, Salop. The second type is the more usual, the third less so but with charming examples at All Saints Pavement and St. Helen's, York. Locally we are fortunate, for we have four examples on the borderland of Lancashire, a noble central octagonal tower at Nantwich, with similar ones at Bakewell, Derbyshire, and at St. Mary, Stafford.

Wherever an octagonal belfry was built a spire was intended if not actually erected; Aughton, Halsall, Ormskirk and Standish retain them as does Bakewell, and as did Stafford St. Mary until 1590 when a lofty spire was

destroyed by a storm, leaving Nantwich as the solitary example without this ornament. In many respects the octagonal belfry with a spire is a pleasing design and can form a compact composition, but it is not so successful when attached to a large church. At Nantwich, however, it succeeds, for the octagon is in proportion to the building. It is erected at the crossing upon four stout piers and arches, all elaborately moulded. The square of the tower rises above the roof line, is completed by broached corners with battlemented parapets and sufficiently tall to permit of a passageway from the ringers chamber to the footings behind the quire parapets. Above the apex of the transept roofs is the cill line of the belfry windows. These are of two-lights, tall enough to be transomed, with a quatrefoil in the head; the jambs and cill are deeply splayed until they meet each other against the shafts of the pinnacles. The weather moulds above them are of ogee shape, crocketed and finialed, rising up to the parapet string. Each side has its window with the exception of that upon the north which is occupied by an octagonal vice rising from the ringers chamber to the roof. The belfry indeed is a splendid design, finely spaced, and well proportioned, spoilt only by the absence of a spire; the present pinnacles are attenuated and the battlements untraditional and modern. A somewhat similar design is at Bakewell, here unfortunately the work has been thoroughly "bedevilled", for in 1825 under the specious guise of repair, the Norman crossing, together with tower and spire, were demolished and rebuilt, while, at the same time the fine 12th century nave arcades were destroyed because they took up too much space and interfered with the amenities of the congregation.

Stafford St. Mary has a fine octagonal belfry of 14th century date placed upon a late 12th century crossing tower. When the spire was in existence it must have formed a fine composition, the heavy pinnacles at each corner standing before the blank sides of the octagon bringing the line of the spire to meet the square of the tower. In composition it has the same number of windows as Nantwich, but here

they are doubled upon the cardinal faces and the alternate angles are left blank. The splay from the square to the octagon is effected by the cills of the windows, the splay following the square in form, not the octagon, and finishing at each corner with a gargoyle. The whole has been much restored and altered and the present parapets and pinnacles are modern both in design and date; the earlier parapets were of open pierced work but the band of enrichment below them follows the old design. The belfry is slightly less in diameter than Nantwich but is not dwarfed by the church it overtops.

The examples in Lancashire are both smaller and plainer, but compact and graceful in outline; they closely resemble each other with the exception of Standish, which was destroyed in 1867 and rebuilt upon a different scale and is now of no interest to the antiquary. Aughton, Halsall and Ormskirk are each constructed upon a square tower about forty feet in height; at this point the angles of the square are chamfered off until they meet the alternating sides of the octagon; the walls opposite the chamfers are plain, but the cardinal sides have windows lighting the belfry. The top is completed in each case by a plain solid parapet slightly oversailing the walls below; the spires which spring from within the parapets are divided by strings into three storeys and enriched by spirelights in two rows, alternating at Halsall but not at Ormskirk. The belfry windows at Ormskirk and Aughton are two-light with a quatrefoil in the head having an arched weather-mould. At Halsall however the window heads are square but have the same type of tracery as before. All these towers have internal vices finishing beneath a corner splay. In position and plan the towers are not uniform. Halsall and Standish are placed at the west end, Aughton now stands between the eastern and western north aisles opening into the church by arches to the east, south and west. Ormskirk is at the west end of the south aisle, with arches to the north and east. It appears from a distance both elegant and charming in comparison with the bulky late tower at the west end of

the nave, which was erected in the 16th century to receive the bells from Burscough priory near by. The juxtaposition of two such differing types of towers is most attractive.

We have at Hodnet Shropshire, a tower designed as an octagon from its foundations; in its lower storeys it resembles a curtain tower belonging to a castellated fortification, for the windows are narrow slit lights deeply splayed on the inside for the first two storeys. Including the belfry, the tower is about 63 feet in height with walls nearly 6 feet in thickness. Inside, the plan measures 16 feet across and outside 27 feet 4 inches. It is of sufficient girth to form an excellent backing to the church to which it forms the most interesting feature. The buttresses are placed at the angles and terminate at the level of the belfry; the latter has two-light windows on the cardinal faces, the alternate sides are left blank. The vice is internal to the north-east and does not show on the outside. To the east is the arch into the nave the full width of a side of the octagon; towards the nave it is splayed out and decorated with wave mouldings running through. The tower is built of red sandstone, ashlar faced within and without; it is entirely of 14th century date except the parapet. Probably the tower was intended for a spire, but as the structure showed considerable settlement to the south, this project was either given up or removed, and the 15th century parapet substituted.

Other 14th century towers of which there is now little or no trace formerly stood at Liverpool, Wrexham and Mold. Of the first, St. Nicholas on the river side, the tower, of which there are one or two drawings, was built in 1361. It was supplied with a fine spire in 1747 but by 1788 the tower was in danger of falling. This however did not occur until February 17th, 1810, when the bells were ringing for a Sunday service and the tower collapsed into the nave taking its toll of victims. The year 1810 also marked the demolition of the spire at Chester Holy Trinity and that of the tower and spire of Childwall in consequence of the tragedy at Liverpool.

At Wrexham the steeple was blown down in 1330 and later in 1463 the whole fabric was burnt out, the church was then rebuilt with the exception of the arcades of the nave. A new tower was erected further to the west, the old 14th century steeple demolished with the exception of a vice which was embodied in the new structure, the new space made available being added to the nave. What this earlier tower was like is not known. The same may be said of the tower at Mold; the church was incomplete at the suppression lacking its clerestory and new tower. Archdeacon Thomas states that the western tower was rebuilt in 1773 which must mean that the 14th century tower stood until that date. The 1773 tower which cost £1,047 to build is of mixed parentage and an interesting example of the attempt to design in the mediæval manner with a classical training.

## 14th CENTURY STEEPLE BUILDING.

## SIZES OF TOWERS AND THICKNESS OF WALLING.

Aldford, Ches. (destroyed)	16 ft. square	42 inches
Astbury, Ches.	20 ft. 8 ins. square	52 inches
Audlem, Ches.	21 ft. 6 ins. square	57 inches
Aughton, Lanes.	19 ft. square	54 inches
Bebington, Ches.	22 ft. square	60 inches
Bunbury, Ches.	27 ft. 6 ins. square	69 inches
Chester Holy Trinity (destroyed)	20 ft. square	57 inches
Chester St. Peter	21 ft. 4 ins. N to S 22 ft. E to W	62 inches
Childwall, Lanes. (destroyed)		
Davenham, Ches. (destroyed)	24 ft. E to W 23 ft. 6 ins. N to S	54 to 72 inches
Eastham, Ches.	22 ft. 6 ins.	59 inches
Farndon, Ches.	18 ft. by 17 ft. 6 ins.	45 inches
Farnworth, Lanes.	19 ft. by 19 ft.	45 to 61 inches
Frodsham, Ches.	25 ft. 4 ins. by 23 ft. 6 ins.	48 inches

14th CENTURY STEEPLE BUILDING.—*Continued.*

## SIZES OF TOWERS AND THICKNESS OF WALLING.

Gresford, Denbigh	24 ft. by 23 ft. 6 ins.	60 to 72 inches
Hale, Lancs.	19 ft. square	45 inches
Halsall, Lancs.	21 ft. square	56½ inches
Heswall, Ches.	18 ft. 5 ins. square	44 inches
Hodnet, Salop	27 ft. 4 ins. octagon	68 inches
Leek, Staffs.	26 ft. 8 ins. square	44 inches
Malpas, Ches.	24 ft. 8 ins. by 23 ft. 6 ins.	57 inches
Mucklestone, Staffs.	21 ft. 6 ins. square	60 inches
Nantwich, Ches.	34 ft. square	58 inches
Neston, Ches.	20 ft. 6 ins. by 20 ft. 2 ins.	58 inches
Ormskirk, Lancs.	18 ft. square	48 inches
Overton-on-Dee, Flint.	19 ft. 6 ins. by 18 ft. 6 ins.	48 inches
Runcorn, Ches. (destroyed)		
Sephton, Lancs.	21 ft. square	60 inches
Stafford, Staffs.	35 ft. 8 ins. square	90 to 48 inches
Stockport, Ches. (destroyed)		
Standish, Lancs. (destroyed)		
Winwick, Lancs.	26 ft. square	78 to 42 inches
Woodchurch, Ches.	18 ft. 6 ins. by 18 ft.	48 inches

## SHOULDERED LINTELS AND ARCHES.

Astbury, Ches.	2 windows	
Aughton, Lancs.	6 windows	3 doorways
Bebington, Ches.	3 windows	1 doorway
Eastham, Ches.		2 doorways
Halsall, Lancs.	5 windows	2 doorways
Nantwich, Ches.		10 doorways, 4 arches
Neston, Ches.		2 doorways
Overton, Flint.	4 windows	
Ormskirk, Lancs.		2 doorways
Stafford St. Mary	4 windows	
Winwick, Lancs.		1 doorway
Woodchurch, Ches.		1 doorway
Sephton, Lancs.	6 windows	3 doorways

## SQUINCHES EXISTING OR DESTROYED.

Aldford, Ches.	destroyed	
Astbury, Ches.		corbelled out
Audlem, Ches.		bridged over
Aughton, Lancs.		corbelled out
Bebington, Ches.		bridged over
Bunbury, Ches.	destroyed	distinct traces remain
Chester Holy Trinity	destroyed	
Chester St. Peter		rough remains
Childwall, Lancs.	destroyed	
Davenham, Ches.	destroyed	
Eastham, Ches.		bridged across
Farndon, Ches.	destroyed	
Halsall, Lancs.		corbelled out from small arch
Malpas, Ches.		built out quite smoothly
Mucklestone, Staffs.		bridged across
Nantwich, Ches.		corbelled out (now hidden)
Neston, Ches.		corbelled out
Ormskirk, Lancs.		corbelled out
Sephton, Lancs.		bridged across
Stafford St. Mary.		smooth walling
Standish, Lancs.	destroyed	
Winwick, Lancs.		bridged across

## NO DOORWAYS ORIGINALLY.

Aldford, Ches. destroyed	Farnworth, Lancs.	Mucklestone, Staffs.
Audlem, Ches.	Frodsham, Ches. inserted	Neston, Ches. (insertion)
Bebington, Ches.	Hale, Lancs. inserted	Runcorn, Ches. (destroyed)
Chester St. Peter destroyed	Halsall, Lancs.	Sephton, Lancs.
Eastham, Ches.	Heswall, Ches.	Woodchurch, Ches. (insertion)
Farndon, Ches. inserted	Hodnet, Salop	
	Malpas, Ches. 15th century.	

## VICES OR STONE STAIRCASES.

<i>Showing Square outside :—</i>		<i>Internal vices not showing outside :—</i>	
Bebington, Ches.	N.E.	Astbury, Ches.	S.W.
Farndon, Ches.	S.E.	Aughton, Lanc.	N.W.
Hale, Lancs.	S.E.	Chester Holy Trinity	N.W.
Heswall, Ches.	S.E.	destroyed	
Holt, Denb.	S.E.	Chester St. Peter	N.W.
Neston, Ches.	N.E.	Eastham, Ches.	N.E.
Overton, Flint	N.E.	Farnworth, Lanc.	S.W.
Winwick, Lancs	S.E.	Gresford, Denb.	S.W.
Woodchurch, Ches.	S.E.	Halsall, Lanc.	S.W.
<i>Octagonal outside :—</i>		Frodsham, Ches.	S.W.
Bunbury, Ches.	S.W.	Hodnet, Salop	N.E.
Davenham, Ches.	S.W.	Leek, Staff.	S.E.
(destroyed)		Mucklestone, Staff.	S.W.
Malpas, Ches.	S.E.	Ormskirk, Lanc.	S.W.
Nantwich, Ches.	N.	Sephton, Lanc.	S.W.
<i>No Vices at all.</i>		Stafford St. Mary	Various.
Audlem, Ches.		<i>Double doors to vices :—</i>	
Aldford, Ches.		Davenham, Ches.	
(destroyed)		(destroyed)	
Childwall, Lancs.		Leek, Staff.	
(destroyed)		Malpas, Ches.	

## TOWERS WITH PLAIN PARAPETS.

Aldford, Ches.	Childwall, Lanc.
(destroyed)	(destroyed)
Astbury, Ches.	Ormskirk, Lanc.
Aughton, Lanc.	Sephton, Lanc.
Halsall, Lanc.	

## TOWERS WITH FOUR-SQUARE BUTTRESSES TO WEST.

Aughton, Lanc.	Davenham, Ches.
Audlem, Ches.	(destroyed)
Bunbury, Ches.	Halsall, Lanc.
Childwall, Lanc.	Leek, Staffs.
(destroyed)	Mucklestone, Staffs.
	Ormskirk, Lanc.



## ARCHES.

*Elaborately-moulded.*

Chester St. Peter.  
 Chester St. Mary.  
 Bunbury, Ches.  
 Gt. Budworth, Ches.  
 Eastham, Ches.  
 Halsall, Lanc.  
 Hodnet, Salop.  
 Malpas, Ches.  
 Nantwich, Ches.  
 Winwick, Lanc.  
 Witton, Ches.

*Without responds :—*

Aldford, Ches.  
 (destroyed)  
 Audlem, Ches.  
 Farndon, Ches.  
 Farnworth, Lanc.  
 Childwall, Lanc.  
 (destroyed)  
 Overton, Flint.  
 Woodchurch, Ches.

14th CENTURY STEEPLE BUILDING IN CHESHIRE  
AND SURROUNDING DISTRICTS.

## COUNTY OF CHESHIRE.

*Visited*

Aldford, St. John Baptist (destroyed)	June 25, 1943
Astbury St. Mary	May 19, 1943
Audlem, St. James	Sept. 10, 1943
Bebington, St. Andrew	Aug. 16, 1943
Bunbury, St. Boniface	Sept. 6 1943
Chester, Holy Trinity	June 1943
Chester, St. Peter	May 3, 1943
Davenham, St. Wilfred	June 19, 1943
Eastham, St. Mary	Aug 18, 1943
Farndon, St. Chad	July 17, 1943
Frodsham, St. Lawrence	Sept. 15, 1943
Heswall, St. Peter	Aug. 23, 1943
Malpas, St. Oswald	June 7, 1943
Nantwich, St. Mary & St. Nicholas	Sept. 3, 1943
Neston, St. Mary & St. Helen	Aug 23, 1943
Runcorn, St. Bartholomew (destroyed)	
Stockport, St. Mary (destroyed)	
Woodchurch, Holy Cross	Aug. 30, 1943

## COUNTY OF DENBIGHSHIRE.

Gresford, All Saints	June 9 1943
Holt, St. Chad	July 26, 1943

## COUNTY OF FLINT.

Overton-on-Dee, St. Mary	Sept. 17, 1943
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## COUNTY OF LANCASHIRE.

Aughton, St. Michael	July 21, 1943
Childwall, All Saints (destroyed)	
Farnworth, St. Wilfred, now St. Luke	July 5, 1943
Hale, St. Mary	June 11, 1943
Halsall, St. Cuthbert	June 21, 1943
Ormskirk, St. Peter & St. Paul	July 12, 1943
Sephton, St. Helen	Aug. 9, 1943
Standish, St. Wilfred (destroyed)	
Winwick, St. Oswald	July 28, 1943

## COUNTY OF SHROPSHIRE.

Hodnet, St. Peter & St. Paul, now St. Luke	May 12, 1943
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## COUNTY OF STAFFORDSHIRE.

Leek, St. Edward the Confessor	July 9, 1943
Mucklestone, St. Mary	June 15, 1943
Stafford, St. Mary	Aug. 5, 1943

## ALDFORD, CHESHIRE. St. John Baptist.

The interesting small 14th century church with tower and spire which had survived the vicissitudes of several centuries fell a victim to the good intentions of Richard 2nd marquess of Westminster and the greed of Victorian architects; it was exchanged for a building twice the size, with a tower as ill-designed as even a Victorian could make it. The original church held 200 people, ample accommodation for the hamlet of Aldford; the new building holds 447 and is generally more or less empty. The whole fabric is dull and uninspired, depressing, and uncongenial with its surroundings.

From notes by Glynne before destruction, plans for rebuilding, a watercolour drawing in the vestry and from Upton church it is possible to gain a fairly accurate idea of what we have lost. In 1852 James Harrison designed the church at Upton, copied from Aldford whose tower and spire formed the only remaining example near to Chester of a small village church of 14th century date. The dimensions of nave and chancel were preserved in this new design, so we have a semblance of our lost church transplanted to a new site and neighbourhood.

The old church, built of local red sandstone was 88 ft. in length and 29 ft. in width without the tower and was designed without either chancel arch or side aisles. Close behind the church ran the moat of the destroyed castle. This was filled in and a new church was designed by John Douglas, of Chester, erected 22 ft. wider than the old church sprawling across the site of the moat. The old tower was 16 ft. square, with walls 42 ins. in thickness, giving an internal space of 9 ft. It was connected with the nave by a pointed arch, with an outside wave mould divided from a chamfer by a quirk; this died into the wall without responds and was the full width of the inside of the tower. Outside, it had diagonal buttressing to the west rising as far as the second story or belfry level; these had a projection of 45 ins., 27 ins. across with two off-sets, the base mould a simple straight chamfer. There was no vice and the place of a western portal was taken by a two-light window with 14th century tracery. At the level of the ringers chamber was a string and above, a simple trefoiled light on three sides of the tower. Below the belfry windows was a second string; the windows here of two-lights having lost their tracery. The tower was completed by a plain slightly projecting moulded parapet, behind which rose the stone spire. Of this Glynne remarked "it is not lofty, yet not inelegant, is ribbed at the angles, and has two heights of spirelights, canopied, with gables and traceried heads". An inscription in the old church stated that the south wall and part of the tower were rebuilt in 1742; as far as the tower is concerned it was probably a rebuilding of the spire.

NOTE.—The new church was built in 1865. There is now a ring of six bells.

June 25th, 1043.

ASTBURY, CHESHIRE. St. Mary.

Glynne, *Cheshire Churches*, page 100.

The tower is plain, without battlements—it seems to be Early English, and has some lancet windows; the belfry window of two lights and crowned by a plain, but not ill-proportioned spire.

*Record Soc. of L. & C.*, Vol. 30.

Will of Roger de Swettenham, 1366. Item I leave to the bell-tower (*campanili*) of Astburye xiijs iiij<sup>d</sup>.

The 14th century tower at Astbury has certain peculiarities; it stands at the north-western corner of the church upon a separate foundation connected to the main fabric by a narrow narthex; is severely plain in outline, devoid of enrichment and constructed of gritstone, not the usual red-sandstone of Cheshire, and is completed by an octagonal spire set within the parapets of the tower (the only example of this type now remaining within the county). On plan the steeple is square, 20 ft. 8 ins. in diameter, the interior about 12 ft. across, the walls 4 ft. 4 ins. in thickness. These are composed of solid ashlar without rubble filling, the blocks being of considerable size 20 to 24 ins. in length and 13 to 14 ins. in height, they are placed upon level beds and are particularly close jointed. The colour of the stone is buff and grey with a tinge of purple full of silica; the buff from the upper beds, the grey from the lower. Intermixed with the gritstone is material from a nearby quarry, brown in colour streaked with black. The construction and masonry of this tower are excellent.

The tower is 58 ft. 6 ins. in height without the spire and is divided up into four storeys by timber floors, the beams of which rest upon stone corbels. The ground floor is 17 ft. in height with a small doorway to the west, and a walled up doorway on the south formerly into the church. On the north side is a small modern window similar to those in the first storey. The first storey, 13 ft. in height, is approached by a flight of wooden steps of some antiquity with a door to match, the stone vice only commencing at the level of this storey, placed in the south-west corner within the wall and continuing for two storeys, where, above the belfry, the leads are reached by a ladder. The vice is placed within a sloped corner 33 ins. wide with a doorway 23 ins wide in a 14 inch wall. The vice has steps 9 ins. in depth, 24 ins. in length and 12 ins. wide at the outside radius, the stairs starting from the right. The first

storey has small windows to the north and east, the glass 11 ins. wide, splayed within to 38 ins. with shouldered or hipped arches. Within, the glass has a semi-circular head but without it is ogee shaped. The stones placed to form the head of the splay which is 45 ins. from the glass, is constructed with portions of 13th century gravestones, in both windows, showing incised crosses. The west window is wider, originally of two lights, but the mullion now missing and the tracery mutilated; this is 32 ins. across and is 8 ft. in height, the opening within becoming 5 ft. 2 ins. In addition to the vice there is now a ladder into the next storey which is the clock chamber 12 ft. in height.

On the exterior the base mouldings are 38 ins. in height consisting of two steeply inclined plain chamfers spreading in all to 8 ins. There is only one string running round the steeple at the level of the first storey floor. There are no weather mouldings to doors or windows, the lesser windows have single chamfers, the larger two-light windows of the belfry and front window two chamfers; the parapet a solid moulded one oversails the main walls a little and completes the tower. The buttresses rise only as far as the floor of the belfry, they have five off-sets, the two to the north are diagonal in form, the south-west facing west, and the south-east corner of the steeple is without. The small western doorway is coeval with the building. It has a semi-circular head composed of 8 voussoirs and is enriched with a wave moulding taking 4 ins. each way on its exterior edge. The base mould of the tower is cut off sharp on either side. The lower jambs have been renewed to enable a bell to be taken out and unfortunately the new stone does not in any way match the old. Within, the arch head expands to 8 ft. 8 ins. from the ground. On the exterior above this doorway is a curious bit of early stuff consisting of a small semi-circular tympanum 11 ins. in height and plain. This is enclosed by an arch cut in one piece 28 ins. across and 17 ins. from top to bottom, the apex of the circle measuring 6 ins. across. Within the church, facing the tower is part of an arch, springing from a respond at the west end, but

cut off at a distance of 8 ft. by a solid wall. The arch is 3 ft. in thickness and beyond it at a distance of 35 ins. is the south wall of the tower with its built-up doorway. Between the cut arch and the doorway to the north porch is a solid piece of masonry 7 ft. 2 ins. across and 5 ft. 11 ins. from the front to back, for what purpose unknown, but I believe more or less filled in with rubble. There is at present no communication between the church and steeple.

The octagonal stone spire above the steeple is 60 ft. in height and is a reproduction of the spire destroyed by lightning in the year 1838. It has two tiers of windows with ogee heads placed on the cardinal sides of the spire and below each at cill level is a string going round the spire. Although not seen from below, there are broaches to each corner supported below by squinches, which are corbelled out from the corners of the steeple in the form of four arches.

NOTE.—1548 Inventory : a ryng of four belles.

1943, four bells 1. 1639, 2, 1647, 3, 1680 and 4, 1627.

Visited May 19th, 1943.

#### AUDLEM, CHESHIRE. St. James.

Audlem has a substantial tower forming the western bay of the north aisle and was of the same width until the remodelling of the church in the late 15th century. It stands upon the highest point of ground, dominating the neighbourhood and is the culminating feature of a structure in which porch, aisle and clerestory are tiered above each other, the whole approached from the road below by a semi-circular flight of steps. The tower is built of local red sandstone cut in medium-sized blocks of irregular size placed in the wall as they were brought from the quarry. It is short, about fifty feet in height and sturdy; originally the only connection with the church was through a small arch into the north aisle and it is exceptional in having no vice, the ascent being by means of ladders.

On plan the steeple is about 21 ft. square with walls 57 ins. through; these as they ascend are thinned, a foot inside the ringers chamber and 9 ins. outside at the level of the

belfry. The western doorway is in the nave facade which is in alignment with the west face of the tower; its place is taken by a two-light window with a chamfered frame 64 ins. from the ground and 64 ins. in width. It has a quatrefoil in the head which has a weather moulding. There is a single membered base and externally another slope is buried under the soil. The buttressing is four-square, projecting 48 ins. and is 24 ins. across, the one to the north-east being 36 ins. across. They have four off-sets terminating at the spring of the belfry windows. To the south and east they become flat pilasters. Above the west window is an entirely new double quatrefoil lighting the ringers chamber put in at the last restoration. There are signs of a destroyed string which shows upon the north side. At the base of the belfry a moulding forming a batter has a double slope and is continued round the buttresses. The belfry has large two-light windows with four-centered heads of 15th century date, each with a deep hollow moulding, the tracery within being new. The tower is completed with a string with corner gargoyles and a deep battlemented parapet with corner pinnacles. The north side shows an extra window to the clock-house; on the east, the wall bears the marks of the original steeply gabled aisle roof and to the south the tower is hidden below the belfry. There is a record that the top of the tower fell in 1815 but this could not have been serious as we shall see when we examine the interior.

In the interior of the church the solid south wall comes down to the floor. Unfortunately an arch has been inserted, with the result that the wall of the tower has cracked and has had to be strengthened by an inside buttress in the south-west corner. About half-way up the wall is an unmoulded string, possibly the spring of the original roof of the nave. Below are four stone corbels closely spaced, probably inserted to hold the double west gallery which in 1853 held a barrel organ and the choir. The east wall has a plain unmoulded pointed arch into the north aisle. When in the 15th century the north arcade was set back two feet into the aisle it entailed a lean-to roof in place of a gable. There remain the springers of the 14th

century arcade built in the tower wall. Within, the floor measures 10 ft. 8 ins. north to south and 11 ft. 7 ins. east to west. The arches are 57 ins. through, the west wall 59. The window is recessed to the ground, it is 64 ins. across and 39 to the tracery which is 43 from the ground. The lights are 23 in width and the mullion 6. There are stone corbels under the ringers floor which is 15 ft. 6 ins. above the ground.

The ringers chamber above the stone seating measures about 13 ft. 6 ins. square. On the north and south sides the seating is 11 ins. in width, east and west the walls are set back but not with seating. The west window is entirely modern but the north window is original. Inside it measures 35 ins. in width and 48 ins. high; it is recessed back to the glass 34 ins. and the masonry goes 12 ins. beyond, making a wall 46 ins. in thickness. The glass is 12 by 38½, the room about 14 ft. in height. Here again are stone corbels to the floor above, which is original and made of wide thick oak planking. This forms the floor of the clockhouse and measures the same as before. The north window inside is 32 by 53 and is recessed 27 to the glass which is 12 by 36 or 18 by 45 ins. An opening to the south now forms the approach to the clerestory roof of the nave; it measures 50 by 43 and 38 through to the trap door. This room is about 6 ft. 6 ins. high. The belfry is again about 13 ft. square, the timber bell-frame completely filling the available space, with six bells inside. Although the windows are 15th century there are complete squinches in each corner for a spire. These are composed of rather flat arches supported in the centre underneath by two corbels placed one below the other. All this work is evidently 14th century, so that only the windows were altered and the reported falling of the top of the tower did not apply to the main structure, only to the parapets. The walls of the belfry are not above three feet through.

NOTE.—1736. Bells new cast and a sixth bell added at the charge of the parish, cast by Abel Rudall. The tenor weighs 9 cwt.

1891. The bells rehung.

September 10th, 1943.



## BEBINGTON, CHESHIRE. St. Andrew.

Centred in upper Wirral, Bebington was an important church as early as the 12th century; it then probably had a central tower and of that period there remains the south arcade of the Norman church. In the 14th century the south aisle was evidently widened and a tower erected at its west end; this was built of local sandstone from Upper Bebington, both yellow and pink in colour, cut in medium-sized blocks closely jointed. Constructionally this steeple appears to be of the earlier half of the 14th century, strong and plain with an absence of weather mouldings and strings.

The tower measures 22 ft. square upon plan, the walls at the cill level 60 inches in thickness. On the west side the buttresses are diagonal with a 7 ft. projection and 36 ins. across; at the level of the ringers floor they have a deep off-set of nine stones, they then rise almost to the spire the top slope divided by the angle of the tower. To the east the buttresses are four-square facing each way as at Sephton in Lancashire, the one against the north thickened out to contain a vice which is entered from the outside through a pointed doorway facing west and the vice is taken up as far as the ringers chamber where it is sloped off to meet the ordinary buttress. As the setting-out of the tower does not synchronize with the 12th century arcade the north eastern buttress comes straight down inside the nave a little over 4 ft. At the south-east the buttress meets the wall of the aisle and to the south it projects 6 ft. with the usual long off-set.

The exterior has only one string which is taken round the buttresses at the level of the cills of the belfry windows. The base moulding is a straight steep splay across the west face elaborated with a second splay just beneath the cill of the window. There is no doorway and the two-light window has the usual quatrefoil in the head; the frame is deeply splayed both jambs and cill equally, both without and within, enriched with chamfers divided by quirks. The ringers chamber has single lights upon three sides of the

tower with shouldered heads. The belfry windows are of two lights with a quatrefoil, the fenestration flush with the outer wall without either frames or weather moulds but a constructional arch is built in the wall above the head of each window. On the eastern side of the tower is the roof line of the 14th century aisle above the present level of the roofs.

The tower is completed with a broach spire square upon plan slightly oversailing the walls beneath. It has plain chamfers at the corners in place of a broach and these continue until they meet the angles of the octagon. The spire was rebuilt in 1805 and has only one string of an indefinite character, it has three sets of spirelights placed alternately, the heads projecting slightly and gabled. The spire is of good shape, not too obtuse.

Inside, the tower measures 12 ft. square, the west window has a deep chamfered frame, the arch 9 ft. across at its narrowest, splayed on each side without mouldings, the whole thickness being 60 ins. and it has a simple chamfered base-mould. In the ringers chamber, approached from outside through a shouldered doorway, the floor has been lowered and is the same measurement as the base. However the original floor level now used as a benching round the chamber makes the measurements 13 ft. 8 in. It is lit by three windows in reverse to the usual plan, for the shouldered lintels are outside in place of in. They measure 4 ft. 9 ins. wide, 7 ft. 4 ins. high and 38 ins. high and 38 ins. to the tracery, the glass being 11 ins. in width.

The belfry is approached by a ladder and is 14 ft. 8 ins. across. As at Sephton in Lancashire the thinning down of the walls takes place inside, each floor as the tower rises being a foot or more in diameter. The belfry windows are arched 39 ins. across and 7 ft. 4 ins. in height; they are 3 ft. 9 ins. to the outside. In the belfry are the squinches which help to uphold the spire; these are well-projected arches across the corners of the tower further supported on their inner sides by a stone corbel. The spire is open to the eye and is continued without an apparent break from

tower to spire; it is well lit and elegant in shape, giving a fine vista. There are eight bells placed in a wooden frame. The vice is lit by slits placed in the corner between the projecting vice and the tower wall; they are set cornerwise and are at least 30 ins. through. The steps are 23 by 12 and 8 ins. in depth, all in excellent condition.

NOTE.—Inventory 1549, a ryng of iij belles.

There are now eight bells, six cast in 1845 by Mears of London and two given in 1907.

August 16th, 1943.

BUNBURY, CHESHIRE. St. Boniface.

The church at Bunbury is one of the finer examples in the county, for in 1386 Sir Hugh Calveley obtained permission from the king to found a collegiate establishment here for a master and six chaplains. Within three months of receiving the grant he was busy remodelling the church for he was already an old man, and did not live to see its completion, dying in 1394. I say remodelling advisedly; not as some writers affirm altering an already existing building of 14th century date. In the first place the design and plan are a consistent piece of work and not a patching-up of materials already in place; secondly this corner of England was well behind the normal style, Bunbury being erected in the currency of 1340; lastly a small village would have no use for so large a building. Although the nave was rebuilt in the early 16th century the original layout was not altered, in fact the present south wall of the aisle to the level of the 16th century windows remains wholly of 14th century date; and buried beneath the ground are the foundations of earlier buttresses now of course in their wrong position for the new lay-out. This 14th century work is of one build and one quarry, and both chancel and tower seem to be coeval in date. With regard to Gastrell's reference to the window inserted in 1345 by David de Bunbury, it is quite feasible to remove a window from a former church to a new one.

The tower is placed at the west end and is engaged with the aisles which are completed in alignment with its western face. It stands upon two piers and three arches

of massive construction measuring 27 feet 6 inches and 27 feet 9 inches square respectively, the walling 5 feet 9 ins. in thickness. The arches are beautifully moulded in hollows and rounds which continue down the piers without a break completed by excellent base moulds. The arch into the nave is of greater size than those into the aisles. Against the eastern wall of the tower on either side of the arch are the springers of the destroyed 14th century arcades. On the western side is a well-moulded doorway, above which is a three-light window with reticulated tracery. The outside is deeply splayed and moulded and is of elegant shape; inside the window arch has chamfers and quirks and dies into wide side splays which come down to the ground lessening the thickness of the wall for the western doorway.

The buttressing of the tower is confined to the west front, they have five off-sets and reach the parapet string. There is a small string beneath the west window which continues round the buttresses and a larger string at the level of the ringers floor which does not continue round the buttresses but does round the tower. The ringers chamber is lit upon three sides by narrow lancets with trefoiled heads. The belfry stage has large three-light windows put in in 1675. Above is a deep parapet unevenly battlemented and decorated by eight pinnacles. The entire absence of buttressing to the north, east and south is unusual. Inside the ground floor measures 16 ft. square, the ceiling is now about 27 ft. high but formerly cut across the tower arch. It rests upon continuous corbelling on the north and south sides.

The vice doorway is two feet south of the tower and is built in the thickness of the west wall of the aisle as far as its roof line and is then continued to the ringers gallery where it is completed by a charming little radiating vault. From this point it is continued within the south-west corner of the tower to the roof, various little passageways connecting the two and the entrance to the ringers chamber. All the doorways connected with the vice are 27 ins. wide

and have pointed heads. The vice is 5 ft. in diameter, steps 27 and 26 across, 12 to 14 at the outside radius and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in depth all in good condition. They number 85 and the tower is 69 feet in height. The ringers chamber measures 17 ft. 4 ins. north to south and 17 ft.  $6\frac{1}{2}$  ins. east to west and is now about 17 ft. in height. It is apparent that the levels of all the floors have been altered at some time. The room is entered from a small passage from the vice neatly fitted into the walling. There are three windows north, west and south and an opening into the church to the east. The windows at the glass measure 19 ins. in width and 8 ft. 8 ins. in height. They are well splayed to the inner wall where they are 71 ins. across and 10 ft. 11 ins. in height with a splay 3 ft. 11 ins. to the glass. The inner splay has a segment of an arch above with a wave moulding. The cill is 16 ins. from the floor and the sides 7 ft. 10 ins. The eastern opening is 30 ins. wide and 10 ft. high with an arched head and is cut straight through the wall.

The belfry measures 18 ft. 6 ins. north to south and 18 ft.  $10\frac{1}{2}$  ins. from east to west and is about 12 ft. high. It has four windows of three lights 10 ft. 8 ins. in height and 8 ft. 8 ins. across set back 38 ins. to the tracery. The individual lights are 19 ins. wide and 6 ft. 10 ins. to their apex, the mullions  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ins. These windows were made in 1675 at a cost of £19 0s. 0d. In the corners, half-way up on both sides but not carried to the corner, are moulded projecting corbel stones about a yard long. The top course is also carried across the corners of the tower, and there are angle joints in some of the stones, all suggesting that once there were squinches probably removed when the windows were "inlarged". The bells, eight in number, are in an excellent wooden frame.

The top of the tower across the leads measures 25 ft. north to south and 26 ft. from east to west. The parapet is 4 ft. in height and 12 ins. through. The merlons are 18 ins. high and vary in width from 45 to 60 ins. There are eight pinnacles, the intermediates set anglewise each side 32 ins. across, they seem independent of the parapets, which are

chamfered upon both sides. The parapets may be 1675 and there are no gargoyles. The belfry windows are extremely good for their date and do not in any way spoil the look of the tower, they are almost round-headed and have a weather moulding on the outside. The walls are constructed of red sandstone in fair-sized blocks, closely jointed and are slimmed from the inside as much as 15 ins. on the way up.

NOTE.—There are eight bells. No. 1, dated 1715; No. 2, 1758; No. 3, Mears 1817; No. 4, 1615; 5 and 6 are undated. The Wardens accounts for 1708 show that a bell was recast by Gabriel Smyth of Congleton. The bell cost £9—10—0 and expenses £3—6—8 including 6 shillings for the writing about the bell (inscription).

September 6th, 1943.

#### CHESTER. Holy Trinity.

*The Panorama of the city of Chester* (2nd edition 1843), page 85 :—

“ Trinity church is situated on the north side of Watergate street. It is chiefly built of red sandstone of the city ; the north wall of the north aisle is encased in brick. In the early part of the 17th century the church was ornamented with a beautiful spire. The upper part suffered much in 1769 and 1770 from severe storms ; it is stated to have been three times rebuilt within eight years.

Early in the year 1811, some very serious apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the spire. The late Thomas Harrison, Esq., was therefore employed to survey it, and in consequence of his report it was taken down, without the least accident. The stones which formed the summit of the spire, called the Rose, was placed by Dr. Thackeray in the infirmary garden, as a pedestal for a basaltic column from the Giants Causeway.

1770. Trinity church enlarged, and part of the spire rebuilt.

1811. Scaffolding erected for taking down the spire of Trinity church.

Glynne visiting the church in 1852 states :—

“ The tower engaged at the west end of the south aisle, which has been renewed in the Gothic style, since the demolition of the spire in 1810 and which must have been a considerable ornament to the town. The arches opening from the interior to the tower are finely panelled in the

Perpendicular style, like those under the tower of the cathedral. The original south arcade remains of three wide pointed arches, the tower occupying the western bay".

Similar descriptions without further information are given in Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*, Volume I, and *The Stranger's Handbook to Chester*, page 83.

A drawing by Randle Holme made about 1690 shows a tower with a doorway to the south with a semi-porch, a string above followed by a window blocked by a clock. Then follows a second string having a slight batter to a short belfry with two-single round-headed lights to each face, divided by buttress pinnacles and gargoyles. A battlemented parapet and a rich spire divided into five stages by ornamental strings completes the tower. The spire has one double light in the second stage. There are corner turrets at the angles.

The original lay-out of the tower was 20 ft. square with walls 57 ins. in thickness; the arches were 6 ft. wide to the north and 7 ft. 6 ins. to the east; they were enriched with pannelled mouldings similar to the central arches of the Cathedral. In each corner of the interior, measuring 11 ft., was placed a circular vaulting shaft, but whether there was a stone vault is not indicated on the plans deposited with the registrar previous to the rebuilding of the church under James Harrison, of Chester, from 1865 onwards. In his plan the tower was allowed to remain on its original site, but the fabric was set back 16 feet from the street and is now wholly new. The tower was to be re-cased on the outside and the following alterations made to the ground plan. Beyond the eastern arch an elaborate doorway is shown making the tower 23 ft. by 20; this entailed the destruction of the south doorway which was to be turned into a three-light window. The vice in the north-west corner was also to be rebuilt. With the exception of the core of the masonry and the site, little was left of the old tower. However worse was to follow; what happened to James Harrison I do not know, but Kelly states that the church was rebuilt by William Kelly. Under the latest scheme the tower was utterly destroyed so that nothing

remains of the mediæval church. The new tower and spire had four-square buttresses to the south, the measurement remaining almost the same. The tower was turned into a porch with a second elaborate doorway north into the church, a Mr. Wakefield Perry paid for the cost and the tablet states that it was built in 1868. The vice was removed from the north-west corner to the south-west, and the south window is of two-lights only. It is sad to reflect that with a little care much of the old tower could have been saved, but the work was undertaken at a time when restoration not reparation was the watchword, for it was easier to pull down what was not understood and to make a fresh start.

NOTE.—Inventory 1552-3 to Rd. Pole & Rd. Boydell iij belles & oon anthem belle. In 1734 or 5 it was decreed that the four bells being cracked & broken should be recast and two new ones added. These were cast by Rudall of Gloucester.

June, 1943.

#### CHESTER. St. Peter.

- 1479. Reparation of the steeple, the parson & other inhabitants eat a goose at the top of it and threw the bones into the four streets. (Poole's *Guide to Chester*, 1815).
- 1579. 14 yards of the steeple were taken down for it was like to fall.
- 1580. 18 yards of the steeple rebuilt.
- 1669. The spire being dangerous was ordered to be taken down.
- 1762. The spire rebuilt again.
- 1783. The spire struck by lightning and partly taken down.
- 1813. The steeple was also rebuilt and a clock placed in it. A clock was made for the steeple in 1585 and in 1612 Jacks were set up outside. (Simpson's *Church of St. Peter*).

Glynne, *Churches of Cheshire*, page 136.

The tower rises engaged in the west end of the centre aisles or naves, and is modernised. The tower has a battlement and four pinnacles. The architecture of the church is all late and coarse Perpendicular. The tower occupies one span in the centre, and rises upon plain moulded arches which are closed.



Ormerod, Vol. I, page 324.

An illustration of the tower made by Randle Holme is reproduced.

Glynne, usually a reliable observer made a mistake when he stated that the architecture of St. Peter's "is all late and coarse Perpendicular, and that the tower rises upon plain moulded arches". The church was either rebuilt or remodelled in the middle of the 14th century, and of that period remains the lower part of the tower and the first bays of the nave. The arches of the tower are quite beautiful, tall and acutely pointed, without caps but with excellent wave mouldings divided by quirks rising from base to apex. The tower forms one of five enclosed examples in the county, Acton of 13th century date, Bunbury and Davenham of 14th, and Brereton of the 15th. Here the tower stands upon three arches of equal size, faced by a plain western wall; unfortunately the upper reaches of the steeple have suffered from rebuildings and mutilations as now to be without interest; not so however with the portion within the church.

The measurements within the tower are 11 ft. from north to south and 6 ins. more from east to west, the arches 62 ins. in thickness. The piers and arches are divided by a 9 inch flat followed on either side by wave mouldings 11 ins. in width, divided by 3 inch quirks and completed on their outer edge with a hollow. In the two eastern piers the inner mouldings of both arches are joined together, a quirk dividing the two hollows producing a rich and delightful surface rippled with light and shade. The piers stand upon low plain bases now 4 inches in height but formerly deeper, having a straight edge excepting the innermost moulding. On the eastern face of the tower there has been a thinning down and chamfering of the wall for 63 inches up from the ground where it has been cut away 3 ins., the nave responds to the arcade treated in the same way. This thinning down where strength is required has been a churchwarden palliative to allow more elbow room for the congregation but from the fabrics safety is wrong. The

arches have an opening of  $74\frac{1}{2}$  ins. at their centres and 10 ft. 5 ins. to the edge of the outer mouldings; they are built of rosy and rather streaky red sandstone which inside has stood the wear of 500 years. The piers are constructed of large carefully-shaped blocks varying from 19 to 22 ins. in thickness and many extend well back in the wall.

The tower has a stone vault with a large well in the centre for lowering the bells; it is a simple quadripartite vault with additional ridge ribs from east to west and north to south, reaching the apex of the arches and forming an excellent finish to the moulded curves. The responds of the nave arcades have the same wave mouldings placed on either side of a flat, they are two feet across, the outer chamfers however die into the walls at a considerable height. In the centre of the north-east pier about 60 ins. up on the inside is an elaborate niche now despoiled of its crockets and finial which have been hacked away. It is 12 ins. in width and 33 in height. Across the pier are the remains of a fresco measuring 75 ins. across and 45 in height, amongst the scenes depicted can be distinguished, the angel appearing to the Shepherds; the Adoration of the Magi; and the Hills of Calvary with three trees upon it. A second niche is placed in the north wall of the tower facing the main entrance into the church; again all the carving has been chiselled away leaving the ogee shaped head with foliations; this is 59 ins. up the wall, 12 ins. wide and 31 in height.

The vice to the tower is approached through a Tudor-headed doorway at the south end of the west wall; this is 36 ins. wide to the outside edge and 29 ins. at the door. The wall here is 15 ins. in thickness with a deep rabbet on the inside. The doorway leads into a passage in the thickness of the west wall going north, it is 38 ins. in width and the floor is one step up from the tower. Immediately to the right of the doorway are five steps each 12 ins. wide and 7 ins. deep. The last makes an awkward junction with the circular vice which is contained within the wall. It is 66 ins. in diameter, with steps 30 ins. in length and

12 ins. wide on the outside radius; here the inner wall of the tower has been thickened out three inches, from about 48 ins. up and 36 ins. in breadth. Half-way up is a blocked doorway, I would suggest of 18th century date used as the entrance to a west gallery now demolished. The vice extends only as far as the ringers chamber, the rest of the ascent is made by means of ladders. As the vice does not show on the outside, the west wall must be not less than six feet in thickness. At what period a fresh entrance to the vice was required I do not know, but probably when the church was surrounded by town houses and the exterior doorway blocked up. This I suggest was altered in the 15th century with the new passage from the inside of the tower, at best a makeshift which however has lasted for many centuries. Although the spire is no more, rough squinches are still in position but much mutilated from which the stone construction of the spire started.

At the present time the base of the tower is used as a baptistry and an imitation mediæval font supplants the fine Restoration example, which fortunately has been restored to the church. The walls and floorspace are also cluttered up with furniture and notice boards which might well be placed elsewhere and the ground floor of the tower opened out.

NOTE.—1552 Inventory. iiij belles in the steple oon anthem belle. 1943. Peal of six bells cast by Abr. Rudall in 1709.

May 3rd, 1943.

## DAVENHAM, CHESHIRE. St. Wilfred.

Lysons, *Cheshire*, page 646.

The parish church has a handsome spire built in the year 1680, the chancel was rebuilt in 1795 by Dr. Cotton, dean of Chester, then rector. A small chapel on the north side belonged to Leftwich hall.

Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, Vol. 3, page 243.

The church consists of a handsome tower, surmounted with a spire, a nave, chancel and side aisles, which are separated from the nave by four highly pointed arches on each side, and terminate in small chancels. On the south

side of the chancel is another chapel divided off by an ancient screen. Attached to one of the piers of the steeple are three coats of arms, Cholmondeley with a crescent, Leitch of Oldfield, and a third like the first, underwritten "Beneficent promotors of rebuilding the steeple" together with the names of the church wardens from 1677 to 1680 and that of Henry Vernon of Lichfield, mason.

Glynne, *Churches of Cheshire*, page 24. (No date given).

This church has a nave with side aisles, a chancel with a north chapel and a west end tower crowned by a lofty stone spire. The aisles are extended to the west wall of the tower, which has a plain top and belfry windows with curvilinear (viz. : 14th century) tracery of two lights. The spire is octagonal and has on the alternate sides in its lower portion curvilinear windows with ogee heads. The nave and its aisles have plain tops but the chancel is embattled. The windows have mostly lost their tracery, but that on the west side of the tower is curvilinear of four lights. The clerestory of the nave has a range of square-headed windows of late date. There is a plain rectilinear south porch. The nave and its aisles are narrow, and the interior has on each side four pointed arches with octagonal pillars (this should be hexagonal). The chancel has some good mediæval screenwork of late rectilinear character. The font is a plain octagonal one.

Of the original 14th century structure of the church at Davenham there are no remains. The chancel was rebuilt in 1795 and again in 1870. The nave in 1844, the tower and spire in 1853 and transepts were added to the body of the church in 1870. The plan has been altered, its length increased by a bay, the nave and aisles widened, the chancel lengthened, the aisles shortened, and an organ chamber and vestries added, and during this time no records seem to have been kept. It is a perfect example of the mischievous results of restoration and rebuilding from which so many of the Cheshire churches have suffered. Through the kindness of Canon Horrocks, plans of the church before rebuilding, and paintings before and after the body was rebuilt, but before the tower was destroyed have become available, and from these it is quite possible to form a fairly complete picture of the 14th century tower which stood enclosed at the west end of the church.

According to a carefully prepared set of plans made in 1842 by Edmund Sharpe, the Lancaster architect, both at ground and gallery levels, the western tower is shown engaged upon three sides, with moulded arches to the north, east and south, with a curious system of four-square abutments, in which upon the same three sides the buttresses come down within the church. The eastern buttresses are set nearer to each other than those upon the exterior west wall and, on their outside faces spring the arcades of the nave. The buttresses facing north and south rest at the west end upon the end walls of the aisles, but at the east end come down into the aisles almost blocking off the aisles against the tower. The vice was constructed in the south-west corner apparently fashioned in the west wall of the south aisle which was thickened out inside to receive it and from which there was an entrance both without and within; however when it emerged above the aisle roof it became external of octagonal shape reaching above the parapets of the tower and crowned by battlementing.

The nave arcade starting outside the eastern buttresses but coming up close to them was rather less than two feet in thickness and of four bays on either side of a nave 20ft. 6ins. in width. The centering of each bay averaged 12ft. and the arches rested upon hexagonal piers. The aisles were more than ordinary narrow, 7ft. to the north and 8ft. to the south continuing to the west face of the tower; the portions butting against the tower were almost divided from the body of the church by the tower buttresses, the north with a 5ft. projection and 6ft. broad; the south with a 6ft. projection and 4ft. 3ins. in breadth; in each case leaving only 2ft. between the wall and the buttress. It is evident that these portions of the aisles were used either as chapels or sacristry or both; the southern side had a window but not the northern aisle.

From Sharpe's plan the arch mouldings of the tower consisted of chamfers and quirks and were continuous from base to apex, without caps, similar to the tower arches at Gresford, Sephton and Hodnet. The setting out and the

architectural details connected with the tower are unsymmetrical and give individuality and interest to the structure. The tower arches varied in breadth, the eastern was 6ft. the northern 4ft. 6ins. and the southern 4ft. They also varied in the width of their openings from eight to nine feet across. The buttresses are all of differing projection and width, against the west front from the southern one was 4ft. the northern one 3ft. in thickness; those inside the nave with a five feet projection were 3ft. 6ins. in width. The interior space of the tower measured  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet from east to west and 15 ft. from north to south, yet, when the walls are included the whole plan was 24 ft. from east to west and 23 ft. 6 ins. from north to south.

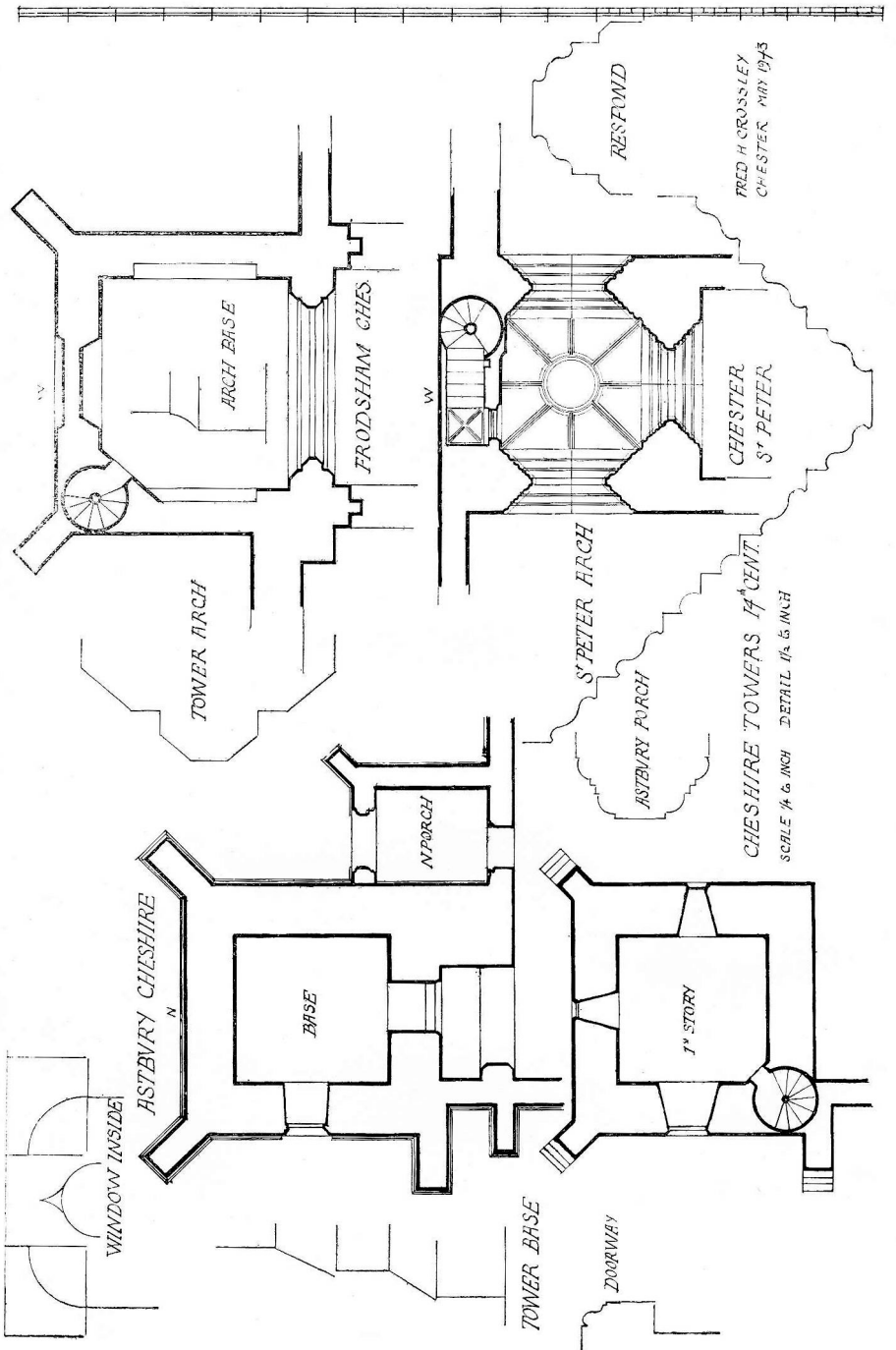
Sharpe's ground plan shows a western portal but without many mouldings and with a straight cut through the six foot wall; above this was the four-light 14th century window mentioned by Glynn; the belfry was separated from the lower part of the tower by a string at the cill level of the two-light windows which had acutely pointed heads without weather moulds, the tower completed by a plain parapet. In the south-west corner was the octagonal vice which was made a fine feature of the composition. When however we come to the south side of the tower we are faced with a difficulty. The two paintings show, in the first the continuous aisle, in the second, the rebuilt body the aisle terminating east of the tower, but in both is a large central window of three lights with 14th century tracery and elaborately chamfered frame which suggests that the upper part of the south arch of the tower has been constructed as a window above the height of the old aisle roof.

In the later picture the west wall of the original aisle has been in part retained and turned into the entrance to the vice, although the western entrance has disappeared and the space below the central window built in.

The spire was rebuilt in 1680 and was a fine one, octagonal in shape and divided by strings into three storeys. It sprang from within the parapet and had three series of windows on the cardinal faces, the lowest of two lights with



Cheshire Eastham from the west.



WINDOW INSIDE

ASTBURY CHESHIRE

N

BASE

N PORCH

1<sup>st</sup> STORY

TOWER BASE

DOORWAY

TOWER ARCH

ARCH BASE

FRODSHAM CHES

W

S' PETER ARCH

ASTBURY PURCH

CHESTER  
ST PETER

RES-FUND

FRED H CROSSLEY  
CHESTER, MAY 1943

CHESTER TOWERS 14<sup>th</sup> CENT.

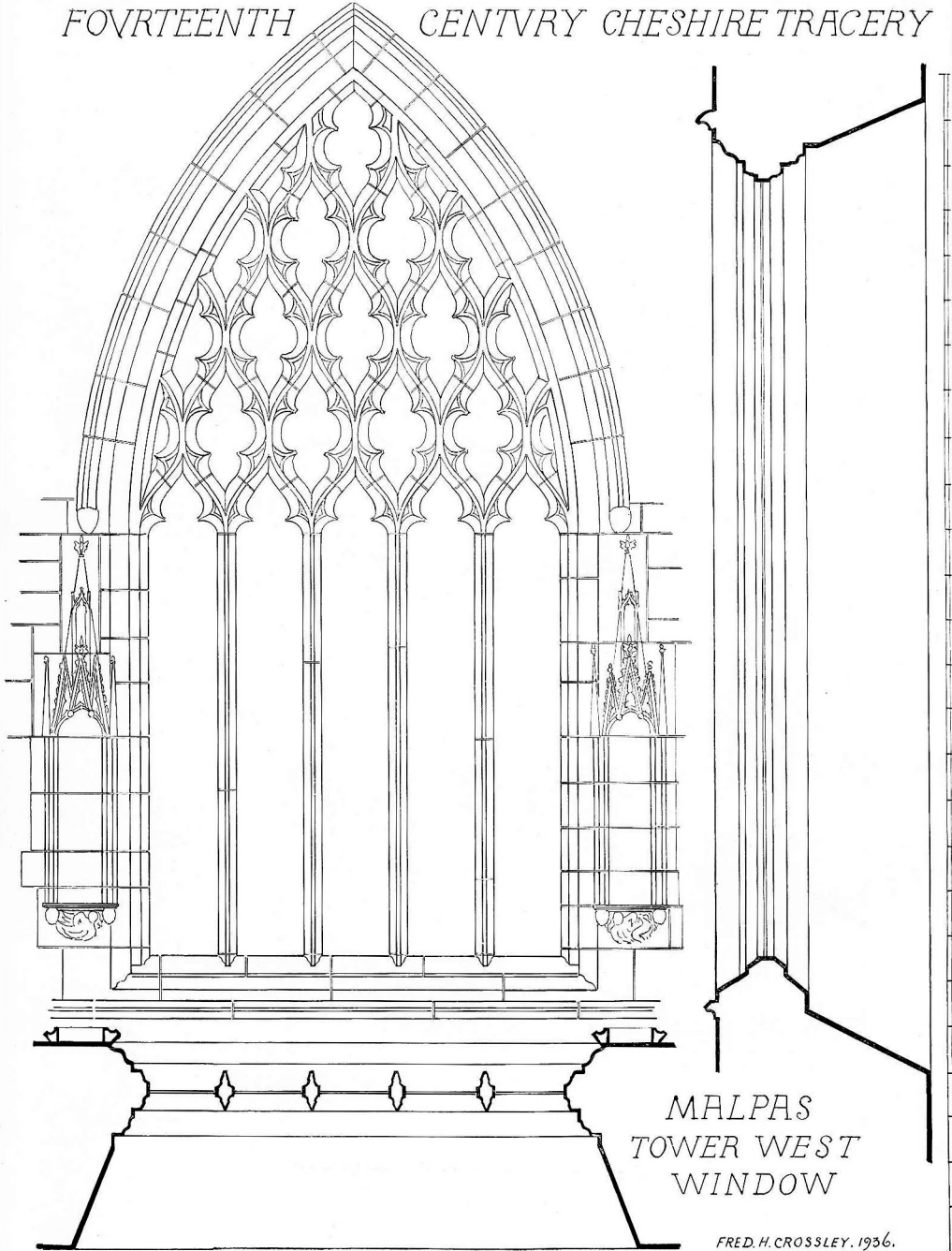
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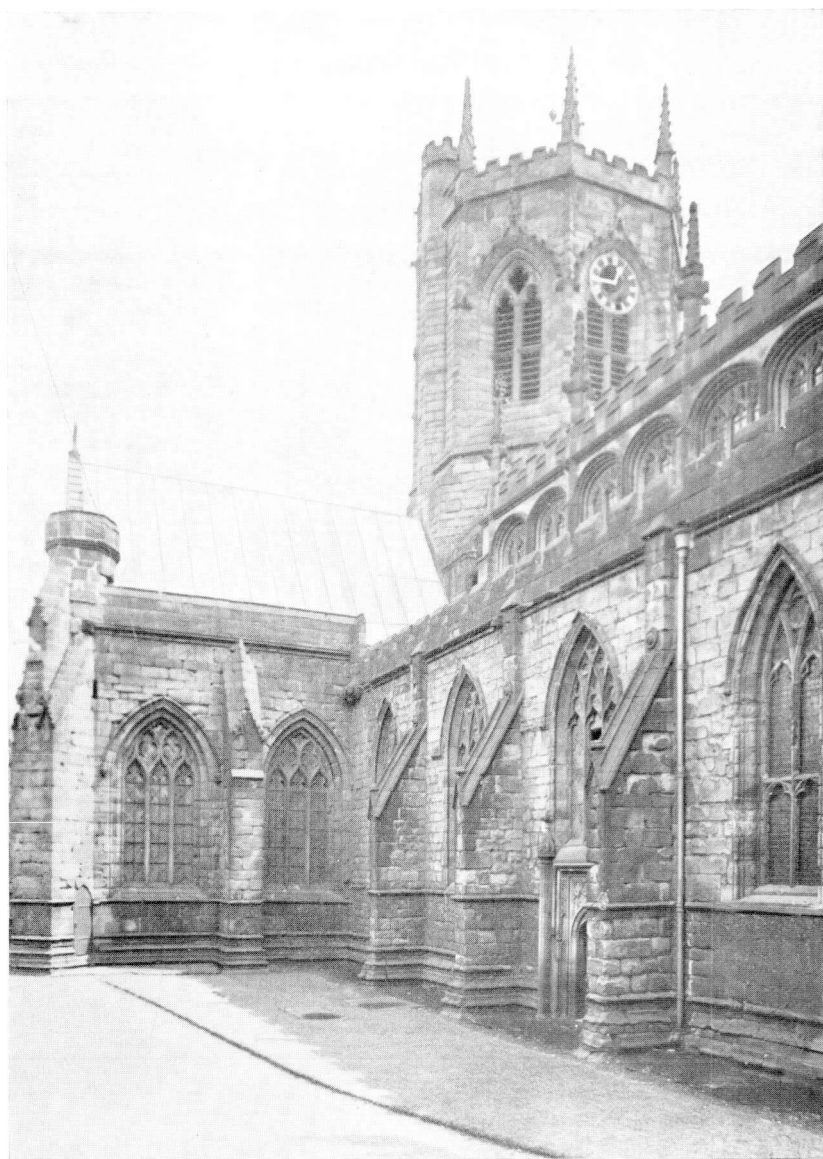
Cheshire Malpas from the north west.

FOURTEENTH CENTURY CHESHIRE TRACERY

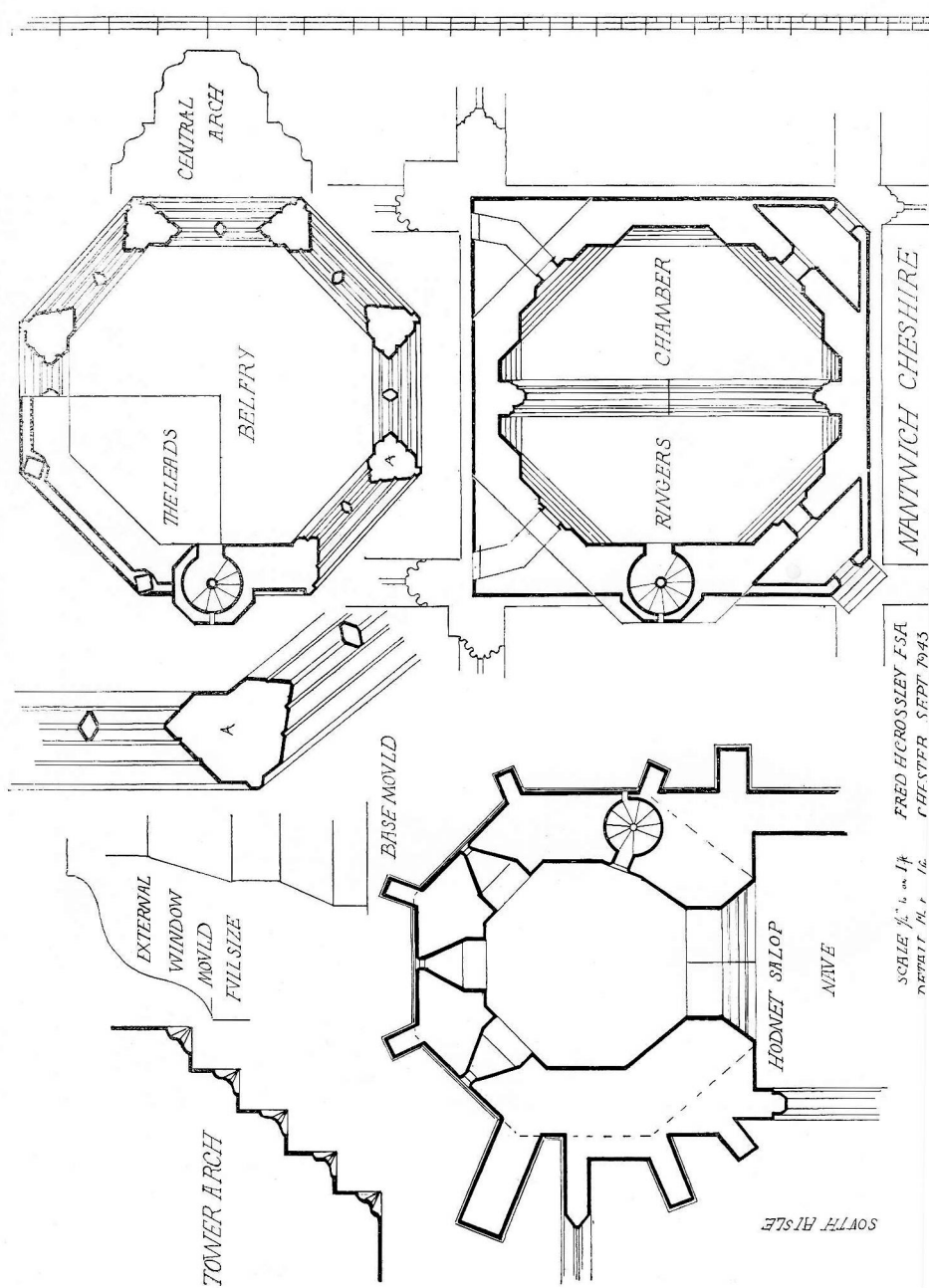


MALPAS  
TOWER WEST  
WINDOW

FRED. H. CROSSLEY, 1936.



Cheshire Nantwich from the north west.

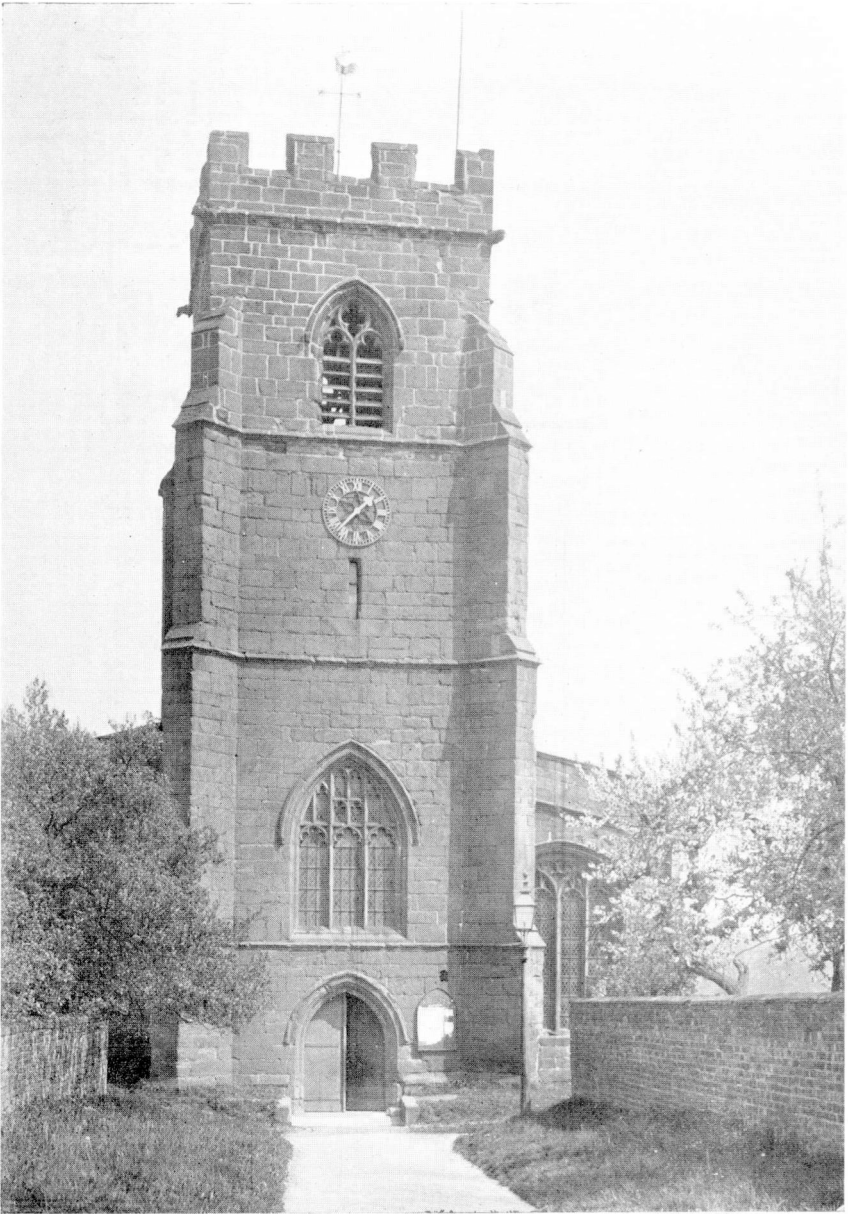


NANTWICH CHESHIRE

FRED HICROSSLEY F.S.A.  
 CHESHIRE SEPT 1943

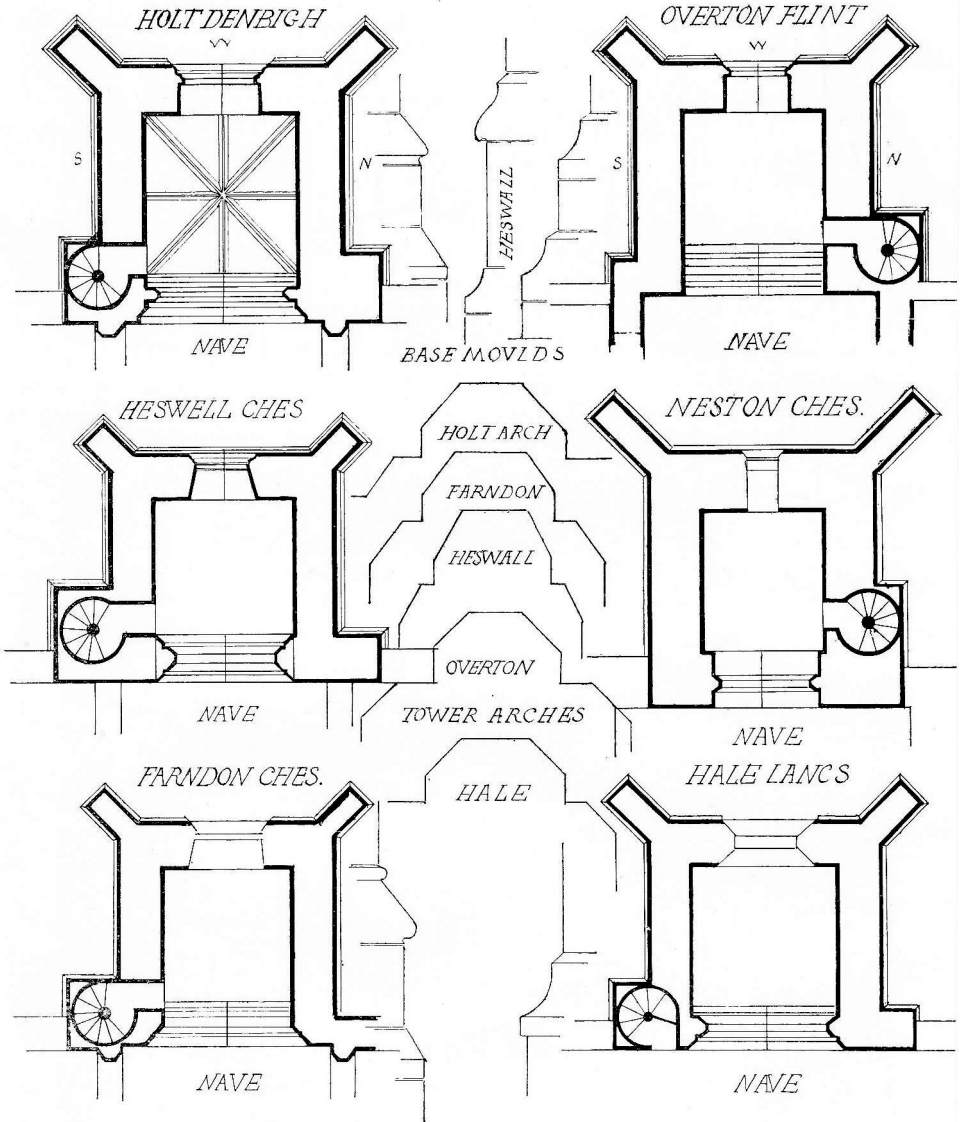
SCALE 1/4" = 1' 0"  
 DETAIL PL. 1. 12.

SOUTH AISLE



Denbighshire Holt from the west.

14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY STEEPLE PLANNING IN CHESHIRE & DISTRICT



acutely gabled heads. This spire was struck by lightning in 1850, giving the restorers an excellent excuse for the demolition of the tower which they had already accomplished for the church. It was rebuilt on a fresh design in 1853, and of the Pre-conquest church at Davenham only the dedication remains. The general fabric as it was before 1850 is shown in the first painting and connotes with Glynné's description of it, the clerestory with four square-headed windows of four lights, the chancel with a battlemented parapet, the aisles extending to the west face of the tower. The second painting taken after the rebuilding of the church but before the destruction of the tower is similar, as it is to-day, with the exception of the superabundant transepts added in 1870.

June 19th, 1943.

#### EASTHAM, CHESHIRE. St. Mary.

Bromborough and Eastham have always been closely connected. The Chester Chartulary 1214 to 1224 designates Eastham as a chapel connected with Bromborough. It has an excellent 14th century steeple with a broach spire, possibly of the earlier part of the century. Constructed of red sandstone from a neighbouring quarry in medium-sized blocks closely jointed, it seems to have escaped the more drastic rebuildings from which the body of the church has suffered in 1875, 1880, 1886, 1890 and 1913. As in the majority of cases however the spire has been reconstructed, for becoming ruinous in 1751 it was taken down and rebuilt.

In setting out, the plan at the level of the window cill measures 22 ft., the thickness of the walls being 59 ins. excepting the tower arch which is 4 ft. 6 ins. The buttresses are diagonal to all four corners of the tower, the two to the east coming down inside the nave; they project 5 ft. 6 ins. and are 36 ins. in breadth. They have a set-off about six feet up and a chamfer at each string used for thinning down the walls as they rise. After the second

string there is a continuous slope consisting of eight receding chamfers, completed against the corner of the tower by a gable. The lowest string immediately beneath the west window cill shows only on the west face, the upper two continue round the tower including the buttresses.

The western facade is without a doorway its place taken by a two-light window with a pointed head, the jambs and cill deeply recessed with chamfers, waves and quirks; in the tracery is a well-designed trefoil, the whole protected by a weather mould. The ringers chamber is blank to the west but has a lancet window to both north and south; over the south is a pointed canopied niche, both niche and windows have weather mouldings. The window to the north is not placed centrally but towards the west. The belfry stage has a two-light window to each face, taller than is usual, but similar to Bebington without weather mouldings, the tracery recessed back, each head with a trefoil.

The spire which slightly oversails the walls below, is a real broach in design and construction, with rigid broaches at the corners which are decorated with curious solid pinnacles joined by a ridge to the spire and having a double-angled front, the whole completed by a small finial; they do not appear too heavy and certainly have more meaning than the turrets at Sephton, Lancashire. The spire is divided into three by horizontal strings and has three rows of spirelights alternating row by row. Both tower and spire are in good proportion, well-built and pleasing in outline.

Within, the ground floor is 12 ft. 6 ins. across with three steps down into the nave each of six inches. The west window has a wide plain splay 25 ins. to the glass. The tower arch is small but well-shaped; at its narrowest it is 82½ ins. across, to the east 6 ft. 1 in. and west 8 ft. 8 ins. Inside, the arch has three members all splayed and dying into a plain chamfered weather moulding. The tower face to the east between the buttresses is 17 ft. 6½ ins., the buttress sides showing about three feet. The vice is internal, splayed in the north-east corner, and entered by a doorway 26 ins. wide. It is 51 ins. in diameter with steps



23 by 11 and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  deep, 45 in number now re-stepped. The ground floor has now an arched timber roof, but the height to the ringers floor is 20 feet.

The ringers chamber is entered through a shouldered doorway; the floor has been lowered about two feet and the room is now 15 ft. 9 ins. in height. It is lit by two windows north and south. On their inner edge they measure  $46\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide and 6 ft. high, they are recessed three times in the manner of an arch with pointed heads growing smaller towards the glass which is 13 ins. by 58. They are 40 ins. from the inside wall to the glass the members being 17, 14 and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  respectively. The belfry is again entered through a shouldered doorway and has four windows with their cills at floor level. Inside they measure 58 ins. wide by 10 ft. 9 ins. high and are recessed 22 ins. back to the tracery which, with the outside chamfer, makes 50 ins. through. The lower part of each window is walled up to the height of six feet leaving a little more than four feet. Each light is  $14\frac{1}{2}$  wide, the mullion 7, the whole 41 across. The squinches form a strong arch across each angle of the tower, they project 27 ins. from the corner, are about 66 ins. in width, and spring 8 ft. 4 ins. above the level of the window cills. The spire is open and there appears to be no join between it and the walls of the tower; the masonry seems to be about 18 ins. in thickness. The bells, six in number, are placed in a wooden frame.

NOTE.—1548 Inventory, a rynge of ij belles.

1757 the bells recast by Abel Rudall, 5 in number, tenor 8 cwt.

1761 they numbered five with a clock.

1943 six bells 2 . 4 . & 5 by Rudall, 1 . 3 . 6 . new.

It would appear that the bells were recast on the completion of the rebuilding of the spire.

August 18th, 1943.

FARNDON, CHESHIRE. St. Chad.

Gastrell, Vol. I, page 132.

The church was much demolished in ye Wars, but since repaired.

Note.—This was done in 1658, when the bells were new cast, the church having been made a garrison in 1641.

**Ormerod.**

An inscription at the west end states that the church was repaired and the bells re-cast in 1658. It was restored and re-seated in 1869 at a cost of £1,100.

**Kelly.**

The tower was restored in 1887 at a cost of £227 and contains a clock and eight bells.

This tower suffered severely during the Civil Wars, and later from rebuilding and alterations. It is situated at the west end of the church and is constructed of local sandstone cut in fair-sized blocks closely jointed. It is four storeys in height, the first three of 14th century date, the topmost 17th century erected after the Wars. It is severely plain without strings and follows the usual design in this part of the country, originally without a doorway and with a prominent projecting squared turret vice, here in the south-east corner. On plan the tower is about 18 ft. square with walls 45 ins. in thickness. To the west are diagonal buttresses with four off-sets terminating at the height of the old belfry. They have a projection of 3 ft. 9 ins. and are 2 ft. across. To the east, the northern one is set straight matching the vice to the south, the tower devoid of buttresses to the east.

The fabric starts from a simple base moulding composed of two chamfers, the lower straight, the upper with a fillet and a nose moulding. To the west is a modern doorway above which is a three-light window with new tracery. The ringers chamber is lit by three single square-headed narrow windows. The original belfry windows are two-light with a quatrefoil in the head and without weather moulds. The top storey has single windows with pointed heads, no doubt the result of the 1658 repairs. The tower is completed with a string with odd gargoyles and an embattled parapet.

In the south-east corner is the vice, the outside presenting a bold square face, projecting 4 ft. and 5 ft. 6 ins. across, having one off-set at the belfry level, and four slit lights to the vice. Inside the tower it is entered by a low doorway, the steps ascending to the roof, the tower being about 60 ft. in height. The arch into the nave is ten feet across

taking the full width of the inside of the tower. It is without responds dying directly into the wall with the exception of the outer chamfer on the nave side which comes down to the ground. Over the arch to the east are the marks of the 14th century nave roof line. The belfry chamber is now crowded to capacity, for a tower built to contain three bells is made to house eight hung in a steel frame in two layers, jammed up against the tower walls, a fine example of campanology gone mad with little regard either for the fabric or the requirements of a village church. Although in all probability the original tower was completed by a spire, there are now no signs of squinches in the corners of the old belfry; these were probably removed when the tower was altered and heightened, not left as at Neston.

July 17th, 1943.

#### OVERTON, FRODSHAM, CHESHIRE. St. Lawrence.

The west tower of Overton church Frodsham was erected in the closing years of the 14th century and has much in common with 15th century tower building in Cheshire, including the internal vice. Unfortunately the tower has been drastically restored about 1890 by Samuel Davies, of Frodsham, when the south side was practically rebuilt, including the vice, and much other unnecessary work done. In the restoration of the church by Bodley the nave roof was raised to an absurd pitch partially blocking the eastern belfry window and dwarfing both tower and church. In addition the south aisle now intrudes upon the south wall of the steeple.

The western facade has diagonal buttressing 58 ins. projection and 31 ins. in width; these have five straight sloped off-sets at fairly regular intervals terminating about a foot from the string of the parapet. There are no buttresses facing east, but one both to north and south, the northern resting upon the aisle wall, the southern coming down within the church. The vice is built within the wall

at the south-west corner, entered from within the tower and lit by a series of slit lights facing south.

The tower is substantial and rather short for its position which is much accentuated by the new nave roof. It is without strings excepting at the parapet. No base mouldings, without they are buried under the accumulated soil round the tower; however Davies supplied the diagonal buttresses with base mouldings of 15th century character. The western facade has a doorway with a rather depressed head, without mouldings except for a single chamfer and a weather moulding above; it shows distinctly that it is a later insertion to the original build, and is now walled up. Above the doorway is a four-centred arched window now containing tracery of 15th century character but was originally 14th century in date. The ringers chamber has a small oblong window with chamfered edges, and above, the belfry windows are tall, of graceful proportions, of two lights with a quatrefoil in the head; the tracery is well recessed, the framework without mouldings formed of a plain splay, they however have weather mouldings similar to the west window. The parapet is 15th century or perhaps early 16th; the string is a cavetto dotted with patera carved in flowers, leaves or animals found in so many instances of this time. There are eight gargoyles at the corners springing from the string, and at the corners the bases of four excellent pinnacles with sunk traceried sides, now capped by 18th century abaci, the pinnacles missing. The battlements are moulded in Cheshire fashion continuing round the merlons. The stone from which the tower is built is from Overton hill, a rather poor sandstone in which the yellowish top layer of the quarry has been used as well as the lower strata of red. The stones are of varied size laid as they came from the quarry. The buttresses have bonders and the whole is a good example of late 14th century construction; it is ashlar faced inside and out. The full height of the tower is about 63 ft. 6 ins.

Inside, the ground floor offers problems made no easier by the stupid restoration and rebuilding. The east wall

has a 15th century arch inserted into a 12th century wall, it is 12 ft. 6 ins. across and is moulded in chamfers and quirks with simple base and caps. On either side are the responds of the 12th century arcades much rebuilt with new bases and questionable caps. The south wall has been entirely rebuilt, obliterating all pointers, together with the vice which takes a 6 ft. splay with a square-headed 2 ft. doorway. All the doorways here are square-headed. The north wall has more of the original work to show; both north and south walls have recessed arches about 10 ft. across and 14½ ins. deep; these have a flattened arched head in two orders with chamfered edges, the filling not bonded into the arch. Before the restoration the exterior of this wall showed that the arch came through; this however has been carefully obliterated by Davies. There seems to be only one possible explanation, that at some time the tower was enclosed by aisles into which these arches opened, as at Acton 13th, Bunbury, Chester St. Peter, and formerly Davenham 14th century, and Brereton 15th century. The west wall of the north aisle is only bonded into the tower externally in the north west-corner. The ground floor is East to West 15 ft. 6 ins., and North to South 17 ft. 4 ins., and is about 26 ft. in height.

The ringers chamber measures about the same size and has one window facing west, the glass is 34 by 16 ins., inside 49 by 31, the set back 43 ins., the outside splay 6 ins., making a 69 inch wall, the window is 39 ins. from the floor. The belfry again measures the same, so that the walls maintain the same thickness throughout as there are no strings outside. The windows are 6 ft. wide but are cluttered up with shutters to keep in the sound of the bells, and the east window is half built up for Bodley's roof. The bells, eight in number, are in a wooden frame which completely fills the belfry. The leads measure 23 ft. 7 ins. by 20 ft. 7 ins. the parapet 12 ins. thick. The parapet is 5 ft. 11 ins. in height, the merlons 27 high and 44 across; the embrasures 21. The parapet is bevelled upon both sides. The vice has

steps 23 wide, 11 radius, and 8 deep. Both within and without there is an absence of mouldings and strings which gives the tower an individuality of its own.

NOTE.—Six of the bells were cast by A. Rudall 1734 and 1782 and there are two new ones.

Sept. 15th, 1943.

#### HESWALL, CHESHIRE. St. Peter.

Heswall church, like Neston, has suffered total destruction, with the exception of the tower which is the only portion of the fabric of interest. It is now at the west end of a south aisle which occupies the original position of the nave; up to the belfry stage it is of the 14th century with no west doorway and a square vice in the south-east corner. Of its earlier state both Ormerod and Glynne give us glimpses. Ormerod writes, "the tower has a singular chequered appearance from the stones which have decayed, being irregularly replaced by bricks. It is now in a very dilapidated condition". Glynne notes "on the west is a poor three-light window without foils or tracery".

On plan the tower measures 18 ft. 5 ins. square, with walls 44 ins. in thickness; though small it is of good proportions. The buttresses to the west are diagonal with a projection of 45 ins. and 30 ins. in breadth; they have two off-sets and then continue to the parapet; at the north-east corner is a large buttress facing north, about 42 ins. square, to balance the vice to the south-east which has a four foot projection and a 7 ft. 9 in. face with an offset fairly low. The vice is entered from within. The base moulding has two members, the lower a slight curve, the upper an overhanging ogee. The west window is pointed without a weather moulding and has new fenestration, the jambs with two chamfers and a quirk between. The ringers chamber has three splayed slit lights and the tower continues with plain walling to the belfry stage which is divided by a string beneath its windows which continue round the buttressing. At this point the 14th century masonry ends

and the early 16th begins. The patch brickwork has been replaced by stone and there has recently been another restoration.

In the interior the ground floor measures 11 ft. 1 in. square, the walls 44 ins. The tower arch is 8 ft. 5 ins. across, Tudor-shaped with elaborately carved new caps, entirely out of keeping with the old work, the mouldings consisting of plain chamfers and quirks. The same mistake occurs at Hale. To the west the window has new tracery, the opening with a straight splay 32 ins. to the glass and 12 outside. The vice is entered through a square-headed doorway rabeted (all the doorways in the tower are of the same design). The vice has been drastically repaired, the steps, 67 in number, vary both as to width and depth, and the central column is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ins. in diameter.

The ringers chamber floor is 10 ft. 10 ins. square, the walls the same thickness as before. The room is about 18 ft. in height and the ashlar is extraordinarily uneven and broken. The stone apparently came from a neighbouring quarry and is of soft texture, easily disintegrated. The windows, three in number, are set low; inside they are 25 ins. across and 41 in height, recessed back 37 ins. The glass measures  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ins. by 31 ins. The belfry of 16th century date is 12 ft. 8 ins. by 11 ft., the walls 34 ins. through. The three-light windows inside are 66 ins. in width and 97 to the apex of the arch, the set back 13 to the tracery. The lights and mullions are 13-7-14-7-13. There are five bells in a good timber frame. The roof measures 16 ft. 9 ins. east to west and 17 ft. north to south. The parapets are  $12\frac{1}{2}$  through and 57 ins. in height; the merlons 36 ins. wide and 25 high, the embrasures 21 across. The battlements are vertical within, but sloped in the usual way on the outside where they are enriched with blind tracery. There have been corner pinnacles.

NOTE.—Inventory 1549. A ryng of iij belles, the first recast 1627 the 2nd & 3rd 1672.

1943. There are now five bells recast by Warner & Son London in 1881 and 1884.

August 23rd, 1943.

## MALPAS, CHESHIRE. St. Oswald.

Ralph Brereton founded a free grammar school at Malpas in 1528. Amongst the regulations related in the enrolment is found the following sentence:—"Also I will that the parisshe Clerkes of the seid Church of Malpas shall cause thre long peales to be rongen on the same Fryday with all the Belles in the stepull except the sayntes Bell and the same Clerks to be payed for their ryngyng by the said Scolemaister eyther of them iij<sup>d</sup> and the Church woman ij<sup>d</sup> for attengyng the light upon the herse."—Historic Soc. of Lancs. and Ches. 1913, page 204.

Malpas has a fine sturdy western tower of 14th century date, unaltered except for the western doorway, which was inserted during the remodelling of the church at the close of the 15th century. Richard Cholmondeley the Younger left 20/- by will in 1488 towards the re-making of Malpas church. In construction the tower is plain and substantial and without strings excepting for a short length beneath the west window and a string above the belfry windows instead of beneath as is the usual custom. It is distinctly noble in appearance rising to a little over 70 ft. in height, built of excellent red sandstone of varying colour, quarried in fair-sized blocks, 38 by 18; 32 by 20; 21 by 14 and 33 by 12. Many blocks go through the 34 ins. buttresses. The ashlar is well worked, the jointing close and when built a splendid piece of craftsmanship.

On plan it is 24 ft. 8 ins. from east to west and 23 ft. 6 ins. from north to south, with walls 57 ins. in thickness. To the west it has diagonal buttressing having a projection of 69 ins. and 35 across; there are six off-sets shaped to a delightful curve. To the east the buttresses are four-square, resting upon the clerestory walls to the east and upon the aisle walls north and south; the original masonry of these is continued down the walling of the aisles to the original spring of the missing 14th century gables. The vice is in the south-east corner, projecting, with its western corner chamfered off, and the south buttress planted against its face side. It is entered from without and within, but the latter is later and now unused. The diameter of the spiral



is 66 ins. with 97 steps, each 33 ins. in length, 12 on the outside radius and 8 deep.

The western facade commences with an almost round-headed doorway which has all the appearance of a late 15th century insertion. The base moulds are cut away without returns and the mouldings of arch and jambs are similar to the tower arches at Barthomley and Middlewich and the west doorways at Tarvin and Wybunbury. The absence of a western portal is in keeping with 14th century practice. Above the doorway is an acutely pointed window of five lights, the frame enriched with wave mouldings; the jambs on either side impinged upon by niches with tall spired canopies reaching to the level of the label stops of the weather mould. The canopies are triple gabled, the base brackets decorated with figures and bosses. The window measures 22 ft. in height and 11 ft. in width; the tracery is reticulated and although modern appears to be a copy of the old work. Within, the window frame has a wide splay without mouldings.

The base moulding of the tower is 42 inches in height with a double chamfer of which the upper is the more important. The sides of the tower have plain walling to the height of the belfry windows, and there are no slit-lights to the ringers chamber. The belfry windows are the usual two-light with a quatrefoil in the arched head, without weatherings; they are 69 ins. across with an internal splay of 93 ins. and 32 in depth. The bells, eight in number, are unfortunately placed in a steel frame and are now rung from the ground floor. The most interesting features of the belfry however are the squinches in each corner built to uphold the missing spire. These are constructed in five or six layers of evenly sloped stone completed above by an overhanging cornice and forming a complete octagon. Whether the spire was ever erected is not known but all preparations were made for it. The tower is completed above by a battlemented parapet in the Cheshire tradition and probably of 15th century date. It is 42 inches in height, the merlons 36 ins. wide and 15 deep, the embrasures 15 ins. across.

The moulding is continuous, 12 ins., in thickness and chamfered upon both sides. The corner pinnacles have been renewed. The lead flat within the parapets measures 23 ft. from east to west and 23 ft. 4 ins. from north to south.

Within the church, the tower arch is 12 ft. 10 ins. in width at its narrowest part and 17 ft. at its widest; it is enriched with continuous mouldings, the outer with a double wave divided from the inner by a quirk, the narrower part also with wave mouldings. The arch is not too well shaped, but has not settled. Immediately above it is the 14th century roof line of the nave showing an acute gable. The interior space of the tower is vaulted over in stone. It has a large well in the centre for lowering the bells, the hollow moulding of which is enriched with ornaments. From each corner of the tower spring two well-moulded ribs attached to the well at the cardinal points, but curiously cutting across each other where they start from the corners, these do not rest upon corbels.

NOTE.—1896. Six bells cast by Rudall, tenor 16 cwt.  
June 7th, 1943.

#### NANTWICH, CHESHIRE. SS. Mary and Nicholas.

The central tower at Nantwich crowns the finest 14th century church within the county, and with its belfry stage of octagonal form is of the greatest interest. Unfortunately Nantwich, like so many churches in Cheshire, is constructed of a friable local red sandstone which has occasioned several drastic rebuildings and re-facings. In point of time the nave is the earliest portion, the transepts and quire later; these three remain the height they were built, the nave however had a fine double windowed clerestory added to it in the late 15th century; this from certain aspects hides the lower portion of the tower.

The crossing has four well-proportioned arches standing upon massive piers, both arches and piers enriched with a series of hollows and rounds, divided by individual capping. On plan it is square, 33 ft. 4 ins. across, the arches 16 ft. 6 ins. in width and 58 ins. in thickness, the interior space

24 ft. 6 ins. across. The tower remains square until it emerges above the roofs when it becomes an octagon 32 ft. 6 ins. in diameter with walls 4 ft. in thickness. The crossing was prepared for vaulting which was not carried out, however at the restoration, a timber vault was supplied which effectually hides the construction;<sup>1</sup> before its erection the top corners showed four squinches built out in a series of five corbelled-out semi-circular rows of masonry starting from a quatrefoil and completed by a right angle with corbels placed at the corners.

At each corner of the tower, above the parapets of the transepts, the square is continued for a few feet, completed by a broach-shaped roof the walls having a battlemented parapet. The two to the east are apparently built in the solid with a passageway through from the ringers chamber to the footings within the parapets of the chancel; the eastern footings of the transepts are reached by an outside flight of steps. The corners to the west however are hollow chambers, the north-west with nine steps leading down to the west footing of the transept along which the ringers travel from a vice entered from outside in the north-west corner of the transept. These four corner doorways are recessed within a shouldered arch and are themselves of the same shape, so that each doorway has two sets of shouldered arches and lintels. The exits to the footings have also shouldered heads making twelve examples in the four corners. The ringers chamber is octagonal and about twenty feet in height. The interior walls are constructed with recessed arches to each side except the north. From east to west the centre of the room is spanned by a strong arch 18 ins. in width, well-moulded with waves divided by quirks; this upholds the main weight of the bell-frame and bells. The belfry is further strengthened by a series of stone corbels projecting from the walls for support of the beams. There are no windows to this chamber which is lit artificially as at Stafford St. Mary.

\* See *Magna Britannia*, Vol. 2, page 440, for a drawing dated May 1, 1809. At this time the crossing had a plaster ceiling.

On the north side is a turret vice, inside four feet in diameter with steps 23 by 12 and from 8 to 10 ins. in depth, lit by slit lights which are through a 12 inch wall. This vice has shouldered doorways to both the belfry and the ringers chamber; it is completed above by a battlemented turret 10 ft. 6 ins. above the leads, octagonal in shape, each side  $28\frac{1}{2}$  ins. across. The belfry is a particularly lovely design with two-light windows to each face and of sufficient height to have a transome. The window frames are deeply splayed with two chamfers, the jambs meeting against a buttress shaft of a pinnacle placed at each corner of the octagon. The cills splay out slightly oversailing the walling beneath. In each head is the usual quatrefoil tracery, the double chamfered heads surmounted by ogee-shaped weather moulds, crocketed and finialed, reaching to the parapet string. Inside the belfry the faces of the octagon measure 10 ft. 6 ins. across and the room is about 28 ft. in height. There are seven windows splayed back 9 ins., leaving only 16 ins. of walling on either side. The window cills are 18 ins. from the floor, the lights five feet. From the window to the spring of the arch is 11 ft., each light is 32 ins. wide, the mullion between, 9 in. The tracery is  $15\frac{1}{2}$  ins. through. The belfry is spacious with walls the same thickness as the ringers chamber within about 4 ins. The bells are eight in number and are now in a steel frame. The total height of the tower is about 93 feet.

The top battlemented parapet measures 10 ft. 6 ins. on each side, and at each corner with a splayed base for the pinnacle which is 19 ins. in diameter. The merlons are 19 ins. across and 18 deep, the embrasures 16 across; the stone work is 13 through, chamfered upon both sides. Unfortunately the modern parapet is not in the Cheshire tradition and the pinnacles are a poor substitute for a spire. The setting out of this octagonal tower forms a unified and splendid composition which if it had been completed by a spire would be one of the finest examples of its class in England.

NOTE.—1548 Inventory. A ringe of five belles & one little auton' belle.

1669 The great bell weighing 2000 lbs cracked and was cast anew by Clitheroe at Wellington, Salop.

(This name is evidently meant for Clibury for there was a foundry under their name from 1590 to 1682).

1713 Previous to this date the bells remained at five, but Abraham Rudall recast them and made them into six.

1878 Warners repaired the frame and reset the bells.

1943 There are now 8 bells in a steel frame.

September 3rd, 1943.

#### NESTON, CHESHIRE. SS. Mary and Helen.

This church is a good example of neglect and indiscriminate alteration followed by total destruction and rebuilding; fortunately the tower was spared and except for an additional top storey and other mistaken alterations which the architect naturally made to meet the new proportions of his church it retains much of its old masonry and character. When Glynne saw the church he described the tower as low, mean and unfinished; this we shall see was because it had lost its spire.

It is a western tower built of sandstone, the lower half constructed of a mixture of old and new material, the old consisting of stones a foot square similar to the lower part of the tower at Acton, being Norman or 12th century material. As the tower rises the size of the stones become less to the top of the ringers chamber, when for the belfry they become ordinary 14th century masonry. The masonry of this tower forms its most interesting feature. The western buttresses are diagonal, have three odd off-sets and finish as they do at Astbury at the level of the belfry floor. The setting out measures 20 ft. 6 ins from east to west and 20 ft. 2 ins. from north to south, with walling 4 ft. 10 ins. in thickness. There is a vice in the north-east corner projecting 2 ft. with a 6 ft. face, finishing at the level of the old belfry and entered from inside the tower. The western buttresses project 6 ft. and are 30 ins. in breadth, but there is no buttress at the south-east corner.

The western facade has now a modern doorway cut through the wall with a piece of the framing of the original window showing above it; Glynne stated "that the tower has shields of arms on its west side and a coarsely executed ogee canopy over the west window". These have all disappeared. The base moulding has a single straight chamfer unless a second be buried under the soil. Above the remains of the west window is a string which is continued along the sides of the tower at least a yard higher up. The ringers chamber has two oblong lights west and south and at the belfry stage is a slight batter with different masonry above it. The original belfry has two-light pointed windows with a quatrefoil in the head but without weather-moulds. The top storey is a modern imitation of the belfry stage to bring the tower to the required height of the new church behind it. The tower was set out in the usual 14th century manner with no west doorway, a square vice at one corner, two-light belfry windows with quatrefoils and a stone spire. The church behind it was rebuilt from the ground by Doyle, of Liverpool, in 1876.

In the interior of the tower, the ground floor measures 11 ft. east to west and 10 ft. 6 ins. north to south, the walls 58 inches in thickness. From the tower floor to the nave is a rise of three steps, 18 ins. in all; these are through a semi-circular arch which is 10 ft. 9 ins. from top step to apex, and 9 ft. 4 ins. in width. It is altogether about 5 ft. through, but all except the straight-sided arch within the tower has been redesigned and rebuilt. To the west a modern doorway is cut directly through the wall destroying the window; this was 39 ins. in width, the apex of its arch 12 ft. 9 ins. from the ground. In the north-east corner is the vice entered through a low doorway, the head corners at right angles; inside, the vice is 53 ins. in diameter, the steps 24 by 8, the depth varying from 6 to 8 ins., the column 6 in. The first floor is of timber supported upon strong stone corbels two to each side.

The ringers chamber is entered through a shouldered doorway with a splay round its inner side well wrought, it

is 66 ins. in height and  $21\frac{1}{2}$  in width. The floor measures 11 ft. 10 ins. square and is about 17 ft in height. It is lit by two windows facing south and west roughly shouldered with corner angles; the windows inside are 52 in height and 32 wide, the cill of the glass 18 ins. up, the glass 16 by 30 ins. The splay is 46 and 6 beyond the glass, making the walls 52 ins. thick. The next storey, now the clock house, was originally the belfry and is entered through another well-masoned shouldered arch; the floor measures 13 ft. 2 ins. east to west and 12 ft. 6 ins. north to south; it has had four windows but one is now walled up. These have pointed heads and straight splays well-constructed; they are  $37\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide and 8 ft. 1 in. high to the apex, the tracery set back 25 ins. and that and the frame 17 making the wall 42 through. The two lights are 10 ins. wide with trefoiled heads, the mullions 5 ins.

In the four corners of this chamber remain the squinches which formerly supported the spire, these are about 4 ft. 6 ins. across the top, and 4 ft. in depth, consisting of five projecting members rounded off on their under side, each member about 11 ins. in depth, the top one squared. Above this is the modern storey now used for the bells; it is approached by a ladder and inside have been crowded eight bells in a wooden frame, where five would have been ample for the tower.

NOTE.—1549 Inventory. A ryng of iij belles.

1731 Six bells cast by A. Rudall. Tenor weighs 10 cwt.

1883 Eight bells 2 . 3 . 4 . and 6 by Rudall.

1884 1 . 5 . 7 . and 8 by Mears & Stainbank, London.

When in 1884 the bells were recast, the tenor had already been recast in 1804 by an unknown founder and had a bad tone, the old 4th bell was cracked.

August 23rd, 1943.

RUNCORN, CHESHIRE. St. Bartholomew.

Glynne tells us that the west tower at Runcorn was low and embattled, with a west window of three lights with curvilinear tracery, a niche on the south side and the buttresses canopied at the off-sets.

An old and rather poor drawing shows that the buttresses were diagonal reaching to the parapet, which had an embattled top. The belfry windows were of two lights. This church was entirely destroyed in 1849 and replaced by a Victorian building in the style of the time.

The lower part of the tower was 14th century, the belfry stage 15th century, the tower completed with gargoyles and battlemented parapets.

## STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE. St. Mary.

### Church Book.

1616 August. The steeple of this church began to be builded 1612 and it was finished the 1st day of this inst. anno supradicto.

1810. Tower taken down again and rebuilt.

Earwaker says :—

“ The nave and tower were pulled down in 1813. The bill states that the church is in a ruinous condition and the tower greatly out of repair and in danger of falling”.

An old engraving taken in 1812, immediately before the destruction of the church, shows that the tower had been largely rebuilt as well as repaired between 1612 and 1616. It stood at the west end of the north aisle, and had a western doorway with a large 14th century window above it. The rest of the building appears to be of 17th century date. The buttresses, four square, rose only to the base of the west window the rest of the tower having pilaster buttresses reminiscent of Saxon work. There was a string half-way up but no division. The ringers chamber had a horizontal oblong window and the belfry dual two-light windows with pointed heads, the tracery running through. In the south-east corner above the church is what appears to be a window to the vice. The tower was completed by a semi-classical moulding over-sailing the walls below. Upon this was a deep parapet battlemented with mouldings Cheshire fashion and eight sturdy pinnacles.



NOTE.—Inventory 1549. A rynge of iiij belles.

1603—5. Five bells in the steeple & j little one at ye east end.

1731.— The five bells sent to Rudalls in exchange for six.

1810.— The six bells sold to Marple church.

1817.— Eight new bells installed by John Rudall.

1897.— Rehung by Taylors. Tenor recast and two others added all placed in a steel frame.

### WOODCHURCH, CHESHIRE. Holy Cross.

Woodchurch has a red sandstone tower at the west end of 14th century date. It has been thoroughly refaced, remoulded and re-traceried, but the body of the walls is original. It is rather slender for its height enhanced by the 17th century buttressing. On plan it measures 18 ft. 6 ins. from east to west and 18 ft. from north to south with walls 4 ft. in thickness. The western buttresses are diagonal, rebuilt in 1675, with a projection of nine feet and are 39 ins. in breadth. They reach the middle of the belfry stage by a series of extraordinary off-sets fourteen in number and form clumsy props to the tower. On the north is another buttress of more reasonable shape and on the south a squared-out vice.

The western facade has a double base-mould, the upper member an ogee, the lower a straight chamfer. There is a low late plain doorway with a Tudor head, now blocked up. Above, 8 ft. 6 ins. from the ground, is a three-light window with modern tracery and without a weather mould. The ringers chamber has a chamfered slit-light on three sides, the only string being at the cill of the belfry windows going round the buttresses and apparently used for thinning the wall a little above it. The belfry windows are three-light with quatrefoils and a weather moulding, but here all has been renewed. The top of the tower has a small string with gargoyles, eight in number, and a deep battlemented parapet. When Glynne first saw Woodchurch he states the battlements were mutilated.

The vice in the south-east corner is entered from outside through an arched doorway 27 ins. wide. It projects 39 ins. and has a face 7 ft. across, lit by slit lights. Near the top

it has an off-set. Inside it is 50 ins. in diameter, the steps, 24 by 13, on the outside edge and vary in depth from  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 10 ins. The total height of the tower being about sixty feet.

Inside, the tower measures 10 ft. across and is about 21 ft. in height. The arch into the nave is 8 ft. 5 ins. in width and 45 ins. through. It is tall with a Tudor head, and is devoid of mouldings except for a chamfer  $4\frac{1}{2}$  on each side. The wall is thickened out a little where the vice goes up. Unfortunately the tower is now cluttered up and spoilt by a modern organ whose position should be in the north chapel out of sight. The ringers chamber is about the same size as the ground floor, the walls remaining 4 ft. in thickness. It is lit by three slit-lights 23 ins. from the floor. Inside they measure 29 wide and 42 ins. high and are recessed 32 to the glass. There is a square-headed doorway to this chamber which is about 18 ft. 6 ins. in height.

The belfry measures 12 ft.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ins. east to west and 11 ft. 5 ins. north to south. It is entered through a shouldered doorway, the west side mutilated. The windows are 5 ft. 4 ins. across and 11 ft. in height, set back 19 ins. They are of three lights, the tracery renewed. The bells are placed in a wooden frame within six ins. of the walls. There are six bells, rehung in 1935. The top of the tower measures 17 ft. 5 ins. east to west, by 16 ft. 10 ins. north to south. The parapets are 54 ins. in height from the leads; the merlons 12 high and 39 wide, the embrasures 21 across. The parapet is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ins. through and is vertical upon the inside. The turret stairs continue above the roof for five steps level with the parapet top. The church was restored in 1844 and again in 1874.

NOTE.—1549.—Inventory. A rynge of iij belles.

1846.—Five bells recast by Mears of London.

1884.—The sixth bell by Mears & Stainbank.

August 30th, 1943.

GRESFORD, DENBIGHSHIRE. All Saints.

The church at Gresford as it stands to-day is a magnificent remodelling of the former 14th century fabric, which took place in the late 15th and early 16th centuries; from the

details remaining it is apparent that the church was of some importance and little less in area. It is constructed of a yellowish sandstone, the earlier parts however have more silica than the later and are therefore not from the same quarry.

The tower has always stood at the west end, and the spacious 14th century structure remains to the height of the present nave; the clerestory walls just meeting the tower without being bonded into them. In setting out, the tower occupies a space 24 ft. by 23 ft. 6 ins., the walls being five feet in thickness, that of the tower arch six feet. The south-west buttress has been rebuilt in the 15th century with base moulds of that period; it has upon its face side an elaborate spired niche still retaining a figure of Henry VII. The buttresses to the west are diagonal, the 14th century to the north-west 4 ft. 6 ins. projection by 2 ft. in width with two off-sets; the later one to the south-west 4 ft. by 2 ft. 6 ins. in width. Between the south-west corner and the west doorway are some curious foundations rising slightly above the ground level, possibly wide foundations, otherwise difficult to account for. The tower has a contemporary west doorway but no window above it, in fact with the exception of the two-light windows now lighting the ringers chamber the walls are solid and plain, built of uneven blocks of stone interspersed by 13th century grave-stones. The exterior doorway to the vice, together with the slit windows, belongs to the later period, the original entrance to the vice being from the inside.

The base mouldings round the tower apart from the later work consist of a double row of chamfers, the upper slightly cavetto in shape; the doorway has two small wave mouldings divided by a quirk; the tower arch has three chamfers. This arch is of 14th century date, of small but excellent proportions, similar to the tower arch at Sephton over the borders into Lancashire; the mouldings being continuous. In the north-west exterior corner is what appears to be a small early buttress now close against the north aisle west wall.

A careful examination of construction and proportions has led to the belief that what is now the ringers chamber was the original belfry of the 14th century tower; the two-light windows with the usual quatrefoil suggest this for they are in the centre upon three sides, whilst the east wall shows a blocked window in the same position, the lower part showing below the present nave roof. If this is the case the south-west buttress would naturally have to be rebuilt for the continuation of the vice to the new stages of the tower. Within the church the 14th century gable roof line may yet be faintly seen coming between the low tower arch and the blocked belfry window and perfectly fitting to both. Without, the 15th century clerestory, nave and lower aisles had the usual gabled roofs the 14th century tower surmounted by a stone spire would be in excellent proportion to the church, and the construction of the tower leads me to believe it was finished in that way. There are however no signs of squinches where the 14th century work terminates. The beams of the timber ceiling are supported upon large stone corbels, similar to the first chamber of the 15th century build above.

June 9th, 1943.

#### HOLT, DENBIGHSHIRE. St. Chad.

There was an important church here in the 13th century of which the nave arcades remain with acutely-pointed tall and elegant arches set upon octagonal piers with caps. It is difficult to judge how much if any of the western tower is of this date. The masonry and plinth would fit either period, but the west doorway is enriched with 14th century mouldings. The west window now contains modern tracery of 15th century style. Archdeacon Thomas suggests that the tower arch was heightened in the remodelling of the 15th century, but there seems no real reason for this. During the rebuilding, under sir William Stanley, 1460-90, much was done and more would have followed had not sir William in 1495 been impeached for treason and beheaded. The clerestory therefore remains unbuilt.

The plan and lay-out of the tower are ordinary, measuring 21 ft. from east to west and 20 ft. 6 ins. from north to south, the wall 52 inches in thickness. The tower is abutted on the west by diagonal buttresses of 66 in. projection, 33 ins. in width. To the east there is a wide buttress facing north matching the squared vice to the south, the eastern side is without projection. The base mouldings are 3 ft. in height with two straight chamfers each 12 ins. in depth with plain walling between. The tower is constructed of local deep red sandstone of a friable nature, with blocks 33 by 12 and 27 by 16. The west doorway has a double moulding with a quirk between to the west and a 34 inch straight cut through, arched above to the east. Above this is the short three-light window divided from the doorway by a string which follows round the buttressing at the off-set. This is repeated above the window and below the belfry, three strings in all. These are returned along the south but only the top one to the north: the string beneath the belfry which is continued on all four sides, the buttressing terminating at the level of the spring of the window arch. At this point there are signs especially in the masonry of some alterations, which do not show inside, but the tower is completed by a 15th century parapet and hollow string enriched with patera. The west doorway and the principal windows have weather mouldings above them and the off-sets of the buttresses each have two slopes.

In the south-east corner is the vice, square in shape, projecting 32 inches and 75 inches across. The corner, part of the way is chamfered off, later bridged over, but nowhere is it strictly at right angles to the front. It is approached from within by a doorway 24 ins. wide with a moulding round it similar to that used on the west doorway. The vice has 92 steps, 25 by 12 by  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ins. deep, the central pillar  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ins., the whole lit by four slits to the south. The tower arch is 10 ft. 1 in. at its narrowest and 12 ft. 6 ins. at its widest, chamfered with quirks, the responds half octagons with caps and bases. The tower is crowned with

a poor modern vault, part of the 1873 restoration, constructed without a central well, so what will happen if the bells need lowering is problematical.

The ringers chamber has three single narrow lights, the one on the north alone being open, and on the fourth side to the east is a doorway to the roof. The windows are 36 ins. wide and 48 ins. high with square tops recessed 44 ins. to the glass which is 9 inches wide. The belfry windows inside have an opening 5 ft. 3 ins. wide and 6 ft. 7 ins. high, the mullion 5 ins. In the head is the usual quatrefoil. The window to the north has lost its tracery. The six bells are in an iron frame dated 1896. The bells were cast by Abr. Rudhall in 1714, 1738 and 1752. On one is a shield with a lion rampant.

The roof of the tower measures 18 ft. 2 ins. from north to south and 18 ft. 10 ins. from east to west. The gulleys are cemented not leaded. The parapets are 69 ins. from the gutter, the merlons 43 ins. wide and 32 ins. high, the embrasures 32 ins. across. The wall is 11 ins. thick, the moulding, which is continuous,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  ins. chamfered upon both sides. Originally there were pinnacles in the corners. The tower is 71 feet in height.

NOTE.—In addition to the lion on the bell, there is a golden lion over the gate and the inn close by is also the Golden Lion. There is a lion on the font but this represents the silver lion of the Fitz Alans. Possibly a corruption of Leon viz Castra Legionum, see Thomas, *Diocese of St. Asaph*, vol. 3, page 259.

July 26th, 1943.

#### OVERTON-ON-DEE, FLINT. St. Mary.

The western tower of Overton-on-Dee though not large is well proportioned. In many respects it resembles later 15th century design but the date may be placed about 1360. In plan it measures 19 ft. 6 ins. from east to west and 18 ft. 6 ins. from north to south, including the walls which through the west doorway are 4 feet thick. To the west the buttresses are diagonal, having a projection of 4 ft. and 33 ins. across. The eastern side is without, but there is a buttress on the south side at the eastern corner. They all

have four off-sets, the third up being chamfered upon three sides and the last stage thinned down. They finish at the level of the spring of the belfry windows. At the north-eastern corner is a squared vice projecting 45 ins. with a 7 ft. face; half-way up it has an off-set and is completed above by an octagonal battlemented top.

The base moulding is double, three feet in height with cavetto mouldings. The west facade has a four-centred doorway with 14th century mouldings and a weathering stopped by the heads of a bishop and lady. Above the doorway is a short two-light window with modern tracery. A clock face hides the ringers window and the belfry windows are similar to the one beneath with quatrefoils in their heads. They all have chamfered frames with a quirk and weather mouldings. The deep parapet has a string, the only one on the tower, with two small gargoyles and a battlemented top, the mouldings however do not return and there are now no signs of pinnacles. The tower is constructed of red sandstone of poor quality, probably from Erbistock, the masonry, ashlar-faced both sides, closely jointed and of fair size, 32 x 22 x 11½ ins. or 34 x 13 x 12 ins. in the buttresses which are bonded into the tower.

The ground storey measures 10 ft. 4 ins. north to south and 11 ft. 7 ins. east to west. The doorway and window have almost straight splays with Tudor-shaped heads. The eastern arch is low, the chamfer and quirk mouldings dying into the walls without responds. The arch is 12 feet to the apex and 46 ins. to the spring; it is 10 ft. 9 ins. wide and 44 ins. through. On the south side there is an unfortunate vestry tacked on to the tower, the entrance cut through the wall. The ringers floor is at a height of about 24 ft., entered through a square-headed doorway in the north-east corner. The vice is 56 ins. in diameter, the steps 26 ins. across, averaging 9 ins. in depth. It is lit by four long narrow slit lights, the first with a shouldered head, 4 ft. by 18 ins. inside and 20 ins. through, the glass 4½ ins. wide. All the doorways connected with the vice are square-headed.

The ringers chamber now contains the clock, the bells being rung from the ground floor. It is 11 ft. 8 ins. by 12 ft. 6 ins. and is lit by three windows all of which have shouldered lintels inside. At the glass they are 6 ins. by 48 ins. inside, 28 by 58 with a 38 in. splay to the glass and 8 beyond, making a 46 inch wall. The chamber is 12 ft. in height. The belfry is about 12 ft. square, the windows inside 7 ft. 11 ins. high and 4 ft. 6 ins. wide with a 26 inch splay to the tracery and 17 beyond, making a 43 inch wall. The lights are  $20\frac{1}{2}$  ins., the mullions 5 ins. The timber bell-frame almost filling the space, contains six bells, the height of the room being 15 ft. The leads measure almost 18 ft. square, the parapet wall 11 ins. The tower has a hipped roof, the parapets  $62\frac{1}{2}$  ins. in height; the merlons 24 ins. high and 27 ins. wide, the embrasures  $25\frac{1}{2}$  ins. across. The vice turret is 6 ft. north to south and 7 ft. 3 ins. east to west. It is 11 ft. 3 ins. above the gutter.

NOTE.—Six bells, one dated 1615; 4 dated 1826. Early in the 20th century one was recast and all were rehung by Taylors.

September 17th, 1943.

#### AUGHTON, LANCASHIRE. St. Michael.

The 14th century-spired tower at Aughton is peculiar in its planning, for the tower is situated on the north side of the church and was as far as we can now judge placed at the west end of a north quire aisle; later a nave aisle seems to have been added, and later still enlarged, while at the same time an archway was broken through the west wall of the tower. An end of a north aisle matches the west end of a south aisle as at Ormskirk, and there are similarities in other respects, in originally having arches on two sides, splayed towers and octagonal belfries completed by stone spires. Of Aughton, Halsall and Ormskirk the first is the earliest in date.

All have four-square buttressing rising to no great height with deep and elaborate base mouldings, having three off-sets, the top one in each case an ogee. Ormskirk and Aughton have the two lower off-sets as straight splays.



Another point in common is the use of the shouldered arch. This is placed above the doorways at all three places and at Aughton all the windows are treated internally in this fashion, ringers and belfry. At Halsall the ringers windows are so treated, but Ormskirk is without a ringers chamber. The tower at Aughton is thinned down from the foundations by a series of splays set at different places on the various sides; on the eastern side half way up the arch and again above the roof. The west side has a broad splay near the ground and another above the arch and on the north half way up the tower, with a final one at the base of the octagon. Inside, the arches differ but are all chamfered and without cappings. The eastern arch is of lovely shape both tall and slender, the south and west are fairly low, the west showing inferior treatment, having been cut through the wall at a late date.

The church has been drastically restored and much rebuilt. The tower however has escaped the worst of it, but is now unfortunately cluttered up both above and below with various unnecessary things and certain harmful ones: a font on the ground floor which should be near the principal entrance, and the clock weights in the south-west corner which come down into a wire cage. The tiny belfry has six bells piled one upon another, in a steel frame quite wrongly let straight into the walls. This example in common with that at Farndon in Cheshire is disgraceful and should never have been allowed.

On plan the tower measures a little over 19 ft. square with walls from 48 to 57 ins. in thickness, the whole built of yellowish grey sandstone, the blocks about 30 by 13 ins., close pointed, but not very carefully laid. As already stated the walls are thinned down by means of off-sets as they travel upwards. At about 35 ft. the splays at the corners of the octagon start, the vice in the north-west corner terminating beneath a splay and having 43 steps averaging 8 ins. in depth, 25 ins. in length, and 13 at the outside radius. The vice is lit by three slits to the north and one inside the tower, the last being the only example in this position of all the thirty-four towers herein recorded.

The ground floor is enriched by a Founder's tomb recessed 18 ins. in the north wall and ornamented with half circles. The arch is 78 ins. in height, 67 ins. in width, with 7 semi-circles, 11 ins. across and 7 ins. deep. Above this is a window to the north which appears to have lost its original tracery, once of two-lights. Outside it is chamfered, and above it on the exterior the wall splay is taken round the north-east buttress as it was originally round the south-east. These have two off-sets and terminate a yard below the spring of the corner splay. The ringers chamber has two slit-lights north and south, externally having trefoiled heads. Within they are shouldered, 52 ins. high, 33 wide, with a 32 in splay, the glass about 15 ins. across. The bells are now rung from the ground floor. The belfry floor is supported upon stout stone corbels in the manner of Halsall; above this floor in the belfry are the squinches worked in smooth stone and deeper than usual. The octagonal belfry has walls 52 to 60 ins. across each inner face, the windows on the cardinal sides, 34 ins. wide and 21 back, the tracery 12 ins., making the walls 30 ins. in thickness. Inside they are shouldered, outside arched two-lights with a quatrefoil in the head. Everywhere we meet chamfers, quirks and shouldered arches. Above the belfry is a slightly projecting and moulded parapet similar to Ormskirk and Halsall, from behind which springs the octagonal stone spire. The spire-lights are now blocked up so that the interior is in darkness.

NOTE.—1551—2. Inventory. Aughton at the tyme of sealing & delyvie hereof to the said churchwardens (Richard Starkee & Ric. Letherbarrow) three belles in the steeple, ij lyttil bells in the churche.

“ *Some Notes on Aughton* ” by Rev. Wickham. L. & C. Historic Soc., 1908, p. 72.

July 21st, 1943.

#### CHILDWALL, LANCASHIRE. All Saints.

The history of the tower in so far as we know is as follows :—

1571. £15 was spent in repairs chiefly upon lead about the steeple.

1609. The tower and spire repointed.

1694. Again repointed for £5, also £7 10 0 spent upon lead.

1723. Bone house built against the north side of the tower.

1761. The tower being in a dangerous state an agreement was made with Gilbert Molyneux, mason of Much Woolton to take down and rebuild the spire so far as one course of stone below the higher sound hole and to point the whole for £29.
1810. The tower and spire destroyed and re-erected a few feet further west, the design practically the same at a cost of £1750.

A drawing dated 1775 shows the tower to be of 14th century date, with no western doorway but having a long two-light window. The buttresses to the west are four-square facing each way, rising to the height of the tower parapet and having four off-sets. The eastern buttresses face one to the south, another to the north, this last coming down upon the west wall of the north aisle. The belfry windows are two-light with a quatrefoil in the head and appear to have had no weather mouldings. There are no strings and a plain solid parapet slightly oversailing the walls, decorated by two gargoyles on each side. Within the parapet an octagonal spire is placed. A second drawing shows two tiers of spire-lights placed alternately. A plan made in 1767 shows buttresses four-square, no west doorway and no vice; the tower arch chamfered towards the nave. Glynne who did not visit the church until 1857, notes that the tower arch is pointed and very plain.

NOTE.—Inventory of 1551—2. Delivered to the two churchwardens, Ric. Johnson & Ric. Thomasson two belles. Md: ther is one belle wantyng which was sold to John Plymmer of Chestre cont'd in the first inventorie & the money therof bestowed upon repacon of Childwall church as the said wardens do alledge.  
 In 1548 Bp. Birde in his enquiry after misappropriation of church goods reported that there had been sold at Childwall by William Crosse & other churchwardens a chalice for xls wich was bestowed on ye bellis.  
 There is now a peal of six bells cast in 1720.  
 For illustrations and notes on Childwall, see R. Stewart-Brown, M.A., F.S.A., L. & C. Historic Soc., 1913, p. 47.

FARNWORTH, LANCS. St. Wilfred, now St. Luke.

This 14th century tower is of medium size, on plan it measures 18 ft. square with walls varying a little in thickness, at the west 51 ins. and at the east about 3 ft. The fabric is constructed of soft red sandstone which has

weathered badly and is full of small pebbles and bits of stone. On the exterior the blocks are cut to a large size, 40 by 22 or 47 by 14, but inside they are small and somewhat ill-laid and bedded. The exterior has been recently re-pointed apparently in cement, the general effect being anything but good. The position of the tower is at the west end of the nave, not central but to the south. It is three storeys in height undivided by strings, but is dwarfed by the modern roof placed on the over-restored and rebuilt nave which effectually spoils the proportions of an otherwise good tower. In design the tower is as plain as may be, without either strings or weather moulds, it has however a double chamfered base mould, the lower member straight, the upper slightly cavetto shaped.

The south face is plain except for the belfry window, the north is the same with the addition of a slit window to the ringers chamber. The west has, however, a three-light window, the cill six feet from the ground, and 62 ins. in width, it has an arched head and contains tracery of 14th century design. The belfry windows are two-light with quatrefoils in their heads. The parapet has a string and is battlemented, but the merlons are of later date than the rest of the masonry which is here less than six inches in thickness. The parapet stands 58 ins. high from the inner side, the merlons are 34 ins. wide and 23 ins. high and are moulded round their three sides. The base of the embrasure however is not moulded and belongs to the older wall, which shows by its setting out that originally it had eight pinnacles, the bases of which remain. The roof and gutter within the parapets measure about 17 ft. 2 to 5 inches across. There are single gargoyles sprouting from the string but these are not centrally placed.

The tower is supported by diagonal buttressing to the west, having four off-sets with straight faces, the whole projecting 42 ins. and 27 ins. across. To the east are larger buttresses facing north and south coming down on the nave walls; they project 68 ins. and have more off-sets than have the diagonals. The buttressing terminates half way up the belfry windows in height.

Inside the tower the floor measures 9 ft. 10 ins. from north to south and 13 ft. 8 ins. from east to west. The arch is placed at the south end of the west wall of the nave and measures 10 ft. 6 ins. across, being the full width of the tower, it has a plain splay towards the nave. Above, the arch is chamfered with a quirk and completed by a simple capping which originally extended along the tower walls for a yard on either side. There are no responds. The nave arcade springs immediately against the arch to the south but is as much as 12 ft. away from it to the north. The west window is set back 42 ins. from the inside and is without mouldings; the exterior having two chamfers and a quirk completed by an arched head. The ground floor walls are panelled with timber made up from the old pews and a baluster screen across the tower arch.

The vice is placed in the south-west corner and is internal. Entered by a doorway 2 ft. wide, the stairs have steps 25 ins. wide, 12 across at the outside radius and 9 deep; they are 71 in number and with the parapets, etc., make the tower sixty feet in height. Lighting the vice are two slit windows to the south and one to the west. The ringers chamber is now unused, the bells, six in number, being rung from the ground. They are so crowded together into this small tower that the wooden frame almost overflows into the window bays. The belfry shows no construction for receiving a stone spire and the squinches are absent. All the floors are timber and in a much decayed condition, there are no signs of a contemplated vault and there is a general absence of mouldings and enrichments.

NOTE.—Inventory 1551—2. Three belles and a Sanct'e belle.

1943.—There are now six bells with the following inscription "R. Saunders cast us all 1718."

July 5th, 1943.

HALE, LANCASHIRE. St. Mary.

The present church erected in 1754, taking the place of a black and white timbered structure, overpowers the small 14th century tower. It is almost square, without aisles, the shape of an assembly room and under a continuous roof

whose apex almost reaches the belfry windows. Of the old church neither stick, stone nor furniture remain and the less said about the modern fittings the better.

The tower has survived, however not without serious mutilation; it has now a large disproportioned west doorway, and what remains of the original west window above it is filled with church-warden tracery. The tower arch has new and inappropriately carved capitals in the early English style, and woodwork of pitch-pine including a screen dividing the lower part of the tower from the church as does the gallery which blocks up the upper part of the arch.

The tower is built of local red sandstone easily worn and interspersed with pebbles; the walling is close jointed, constructed of fair-sized blocks of stone measuring 32 by 15; 38 by 17 and 28 by 12. On plan the tower is about 19 ft. square with walls 45 inches in thickness. To the west the buttresses are diagonal with a projection of 4 ft. and are 32 ins. in breadth; they have each five off-sets of pleasant curve, the buttressing finishing a course below the parapet. There are no buttresses to the east, one only to the north, and a squared vice to the south about 66 inches square. It is entered from the nave through a low doorway, the steps are 25 ins. across, 12 ins. wide on the outside radius and 9 ins. deep, 57 in number; the slit lights to the vice are 14 inches through.

The tower has a single curved splay for base mould; the west front starts with the large modern doorway which takes the place of an old solid wall, and what remains of the original west window appears above this. The ringers chamber is lit by a slit light to the west only and within it has a shouldered head. The belfry windows are two-light with a quatrefoil in the head, they measure 4 ft. across, are 7 ft. 10 ins. to the apex in height and the wall at this point is 39 inches in thickness. There are five bells still housed in a wooden frame, but they are now rung from the ground floor. There are no signs of squinches in the corners and it is evident that the tower never had a spire. The battle-mented parapet is 66 inches in height, the merlons are 32

inches across and 27 in height, the embrasures 22 across. The battlement is 11 inches in thickness with a continuous moulding in the Cheshire tradition, chamfered upon both sides. There are stumps of eight pinnacles and there is a gargyle to each side but not centrally placed. The lead flat inside the parapet measures 17 ft. 5 inches square.

Within, the tower arch is 9 ft. 10 ins. at its narrowest and 12 ft. 10 ins. at its widest splay; it is composed of chamfers and quirks and it is more than doubtful if it originally had caps, as in nearly all these 14th century chamfered arches the mouldings are continuous. It would most certainly be innocent of the present type of capitals. There are no responds to the nave as it was a timber church. Similarly constructed stone towers to timber churches were built in the 15th century at Bosley, Lower Peover and Holmes Chapel and there was a 14th century one at Congleton, all in Cheshire; none of these examples had responds.

NOTE.—Bells. Inventory 1551—2. Three bells

There were two belles here weighing 7 cwt at 120lbs per cwt, which were taken away, their value being £5—5—0.

June 11th, 1943.

#### HALSALL, LANCASHIRE. St. Cuthbert.

The greater part of this church is good 14th century work in spite of much restoration and rebuilding; the noble chancel and the tower bordering upon the 15th century in style are excellent examples of transitional design. In plan the western tower resembles Aughton, Ormskirk and Standish, in that it commences as a square and finishes as an octagon. Although of fair size it perhaps does not bulk up sufficiently against the church behind it, but it is always difficult to make an octagonal tower impressive, although it gains in other ways. It is built of a brownish sandstone and although soft, contains a fair amount of silica in its composition. The blocks are well laid of average size about 25 by 15 by 13 inches. On plan the tower is 21 ft. 8 ins. square, the walls differing in thickness, those north and south being  $56\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

The tower commences with an elaborate base moulding consisting of two ogee chamfers and a cavetto as its lowest member, this is about 54 inches in height. The buttresses to the west are four-square but only rise to the floor of the ringers chamber. They have a projection of 60 ins. and are 27 across, having one off-set; they terminate in a long gabled slope with cusped gabled fronts similar to the south aisle at Malpas; upon the north-west gable is a small hollow for a little figure now missing. From the base mould to the first string is 65 ins.; this is placed at the base of the window cill, there being no west portal. The window is of two-lights with a square head having a broad weather moulding, which like the lower string is continued round the tower but does not include the buttresses. The window frame has two chamfers with a quirk between, the shape of the chamfers having lost the effect of wave moulding though it retains the tipped-up edge. The tracery is 15th century in style with an arched head.

The two strings and the buttressing form an interesting method in the thinning down of the walling as it ascends. First the buttresses are nine inches from the corner of the tower until the first string is reached, when the width is reduced to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ins. After the second string is passed the buttresses come together, so that in the ground storey the walls have been reduced nine inches. The strings are deep hollows with sloped tops; the south-west buttress has been weakened by the insertion of a doorway which formerly led into the grammar school erected against the south side of the tower in 1598. On the west face of the tower about 36 ft. up is a single window with a trefoil head now lighting the ringers chamber, all the windows connected with the tower have square heads whatever shape the tracery may be within them. At either side of this window the tower corners are chamfered away in preparation to meet the octagonal belfry above, which is again set back a little by another moulding which follows carefully the chamfers and roof of the nave. The belfry is lit by two-light square-headed windows placed on the cardinal sides of the octagon,



the tracery with quatrefoil decoration. The belfry is completed with a plain parapet with gargoyles in the centres over the windows. Behind the parapet rises an octagonal spire rebuilt in 1852 not quite to the old design; it is divided by two strings and has sets of spirelights, the lower cardinal, the upper at the angles. The tower is 63 feet in height and the spire another, making 126 ft. in all.

Inside, the floor of the tower is two steps above the nave and measures 12 ft. 3 ins. across. It is entered by an excellently proportioned arch 27 ft. in height and 10 in width, at the widest moulding 15 ft. On the tower side the arch is chamfered dying into the wall, but to the west the mouldings are elaborated in the 15th century manner, the innermost having a double base, first octagonal and then round, with a cap above to match. The west window is 10 ft. from the floor, it is 6 ft. wide and 3 ft. back to the glass it has an arched head. The vice is in the south-west corner, entered through a doorway in the splayed wall 19 ins. in width and 69 ins. in height, with a shouldered head and decorated with a delicate moulding. The vice is 4 ft. in diameter with steps 22 ins. across and 12 wide at the outside radius, and 10 deep; there are 47 steps to the ringers chamber where they terminate. The vice is lit by slit lights, two to the west, one to the south and one inside the tower.

The ringers chamber is interesting; the present wooden floor is three feet lower than originally, for there is a continuous corbelling for it both north and south projecting  $10\frac{1}{2}$  ins. and 12 deep with an ogee moulding. The single window to the west has an inner edge of 39 by 70 ins., it recedes 36 ins. to the glass which is 12 by 42 ins. and has a shouldered head. In the corners above are squinches to uphold the cross sides of the octagon. They each start from a small arch cut out of a solid block of stone, and then continue upwards with three projecting slopes with upright edges; they finish with an overhanging cornice of bull-nose shape forming a complete octagon each side 60 inches in width. It is now impossible to approach the belfry except by resorting to gymnastical exercises, it how-

ever contains six bells. From the characteristics of the construction it would appear that originally the bells were rung from the ground floor and that the bell frame rested upon the floor supported by the mediæval corbels, leaving an open lantern above.

NOTE.—1551—2. Inventory, three belles.  
 1943.—Six bells, rehung 1887. The first four recast by Mears and Stainbank in 1786; the fifth in 1887 by Taylors and the sixth in 1811.  
 See also Hist. Soc. Lanc. & Ches., 1896, pages 193-252.

June 21st, 1943.

#### ORMSKIRK, LANCASHIRE. SS. Peter and Paul.

In the thorough and completely drastic restoration and rebuilding which befell the church, the two towers fortunately escaped severe mutilation; the small late 14th century steeple at the west end of the south aisle and the later bell tower at the west end of the nave erected to contain the bells from the priory of Burscough. The steeple at the end of the south aisle is 14th not 15th century as has been stated and is one of the series which include Aughton, Halsall and Standish, all starting as square towers from the ground and completed with octagonal belfries and stone spires above. The one at Ormskirk is not now used as a belfry, the bells being in the greater tower.

The lower half is designed with arches to the north and east and the main entrance to the church to the south as was formerly at Holy Trinity, Chester, but here protected by a modern porch. With the exception of a two-light window above the porch, also modern, the tower is without windowing in its lower half. The west side is the only face now unencumbered and shows four-square buttressing projecting 4 ft. and a little over 2 ft. across. These with the tower have an elaborate series of base mouldings extending up the walls for six feet, with three off-sets, the uppermost of ogee form, the two lower straight chamfers. The buttresses terminate above in a long slope about two-thirds up the tower. With the exception of the south-west corner which shows a return buttress to the south, the

remainder of the south side is lost behind the modern porch. The doorway opening into this from the tower has now two wave moulds divided by a quirk.

On plan the tower is about 18 ft. square with 4 ft. walls, the vice internal in the south-west corner. On the outside the corners of the lower structure are splayed off to meet the octagonal belfry above which starts 33 ft. 6 ins. from the ground. There is also a small splay round the octagon which is of no great height, with walls 30 ins. in thickness. There are two-light windows on the cardinal sides with quatrefoils in the heads and surmounted by weather moulds. The octagon is completed by an overhanging plain moulded parapet from inside of which springs a stone spire divided by three strings and lit by two tiers of spirelights on the cardinal sides. It is evident that the octagonal belfry has been refaced and the spire rebuilt, the top string is certainly wrong.

Inside the tower are arches to the north and east enriched by chamfers and quirks, the arch to the east narrow and pointed, the arch dying into the wall on the south side but completed with a respond to the north with continuous mouldings. Above this arch on the eastern wall are the marks of the original gabled roof. To the north the arch has been rebuilt, the inner member now dying on the eastern side on a modern corbel. Both these arches have plain chamfered bases of modern making. The inside floor space is ten feet with a splay across the south-west corner for the internal vice which is entered by a two foot shouldered doorway placed on a 16 in. step. To the south is the doorway first splayed then straight sided; above it is an inside retaining arch similar to that to the east, with the modern two-light window below. The vice is 57 ins. across with a  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in. post. The steps are 24 ins. wide with an outside radius of 13 ins.,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ins. deep and 39 in number; the vice is lit by three slit lights in the west wall. It is completed under the tower corner splay and enters the belfry by another shouldered doorway. The eight walls of the belfry are each about 57 ins. in width and the timber

floor is placed at the spring of the squinches which are 54 ins. in height having four sloping layers of stone with upright and sloping edges, 9 ins. above the window cills. The windows are 3 ft. wide and 18 ins. deep to the tracery which is 12 ins. through, the inner arch 86 ins. in height. Upon the octagon is placed the spire open to the apex, giving an uninterrupted view of the construction. With a strong west wind blowing the noise within it is startling. The external effect of this diminutive octagonal belfry and spire placed in close proximity to the huge bell house behind it is unique, for while the juxtaposition adds to the delicacy of the 14th century steeple it gives the bell house an even greater majesty, for it is 33 ft. square with walls 90 inches in thickness.

NOTE.—Inventory of 1551-2. fyve belles.

Baily. *Inventories of Church goods in Lancashire*, p. 115. Eight bells were said to have been brought from Burscough priory the tower being built for them. Two have the dates 1497 and 1576. Thomas 2nd earl of Derby bequeathed £30 to the wardens to buy a bell for their church.

Atkinson. *Glynne's Churches of Lancashire*, p. 10.

The two dates 1497 and 1576 are both on one bell. The date and inscription was cut from the earlier bell and let in when it was recast in 1576. "I.S. de B.Armig. et e ux. me fecerunt in honore Trinitatis. R.B.1497". There are ornamental devices between each word.

There is now a peal of eight bells.

July 12th, 1943.

#### SEPHTON, LANCASHIRE. St. Helen.

This interesting tower of the first half of the 14th century and the same age as Aughton forms the principal remnant of a coeval fabric whose gabled roof line yet appears above the tower arch into the nave. It is now a little overshadowed by the remodelled church of the 16th century, a re-modelling which produced a refined and splendid building fortunately retaining much of its mediæval fittings. The tower of no great size, is simply designed with an absence of elaborations and flourishes. It is some 21 ft. in diameter, about 50 ft. in height, constructed of a yellowish sandstone of local origin in medium-sized blocks and completed by a stone spire about 60 ft. in height.

The western face is without a doorway, having a two-light window set eleven feet above the ground, it is placed in a chamfered frame divided by a quirk and has the usual quatrefoil in the head. Immediately above the apex of the window is the only batter, some six inches in depth, the single outside thinning shown on the walling. The ringers chamber has a narrow squared light now obscured by the clock face and the belfry has also a two-light window with a quatrefoil, the tracery set close to the outside face. The tower is completed with a solid moulded parapet oversailing the wall beneath with a small gargoyle in the centre of the face. The sides of the tower are plainer, the south side has a ringers window and four slit-lights to the vice; to the height of the batter an additional thickness of walling has been added, 18 ins. in thickness at the base, slimming as it rises to the batter. The north side has no ringers window or other ornamentation.

The tower is well-supported by buttressing, diagonal to the west with a five foot projection three feet in breadth, having three straight splayed off-sets. To the east however there are buttresses facing each way, they all reach within a foot of the parapet of the tower; one comes down upon the 14th century wall of the north aisle, the southern one is complete to the ground, against which the new 16th century wall now abuts. Within, the base moulding shows that the 14th century church had no aisle. To the east are two buttresses, 18 ins. in thickness, coming down within the church without off-sets; to the original height of the 14th century church they are widened out with a splay towards the tower arch. The base mould round the exterior consists of two straight splays, the upper projecting, the lower not, they rise three feet up the walling.

Within, the ground floor is 11 ft. 1 inch north to south with walls 60 ins. in thickness; from east to west it is 16 ft. 3 ins. occasioned by the tower arch being without responds, the arch dying into the tower leaving the arch the full width of the tower. The arch is chamfered on both sides in three members with quirks between and is of pleasing

shape. The west window is 11 ft. 5 ins. above the floor and the vice is in the south-west corner. Cut in the tower walls are three aumbries north, south and west. The first is 28 ins. from the ground with an opening 25 ins. wide and 18 ins. high and 18 ins. in depth. The second is 41 ins. from the ground, 24 ins. wide, 18 high and 20 deep. The western aumbry is 54 ins. from the ground, 24 ins. wide, 25 high and 20 deep. In all cases the cupboards extend a little on either side of the opening.

The vice has a splayed corner 50 ins. across containing a doorway 22½ ins. in width, with a splayed moulding round it; it has a shouldered lintel. This tower, like the tower at Aughton, possesses nine examples of this arch in various positions. The doorway is 8 ins. in depth, the vice having 69 steps 22 ins. wide, 14 ins. at the outside radius, and 8 ins. in depth. It is lit by slit lights through a wall at least 30 ins. thick. The floors throughout are of timber supported upon large stone corbels as is usual in this district. The first chamber now the clock house but originally the ringers chamber—the bells are now rung from the ground—has two windows west and south, 26 ins. across and 36 ins. through to tracery which is 8 ins. thick. The tops originally had shouldered heads now largely destroyed by the insertion of a modern floor. This room measures 12 ft. square.

The belfry above, now as dark as a bag, the windows being virtually blocked up, is the most interesting part of the tower. It has a shouldered doorway and four two-light windows, pointed outside, but shouldered within as at Aughton, measuring 33 ins. across by 7 ft. 9 ins. in height and 35 ins. back to the tracery. The floor is 13 ft. square, each floor as the tower ascends being a foot larger. In the corners are the squinches upholding the spire; these are built in large pointed arches solid to the corners and form the complete octagon above.

The top of the tower is crowded with spire and corner turrets; it is 22 ft. square, the parapets nine ins. in thickness, continuous and chamfered upon both sides. The spire occupies the centre with cardinal sides each commencing at

7 ft. 3 ins., the alternate sides 6 ft., leaving a footing of  $22\frac{1}{2}$  ins. round the sides. In the corners are large hollow turrets, the five outside angles forming part of an octagon. The turrets are 9 ft. 4 ins. to the spring of their roof line; they are built of nine inch walls and outside are 54 by 41 ins. with a passage through, the doorways 17 ins. wide. The vice finishes in the turret at the south-west corner. The spire was rebuilt in 1802 and calls for no particular remark except that in place of spirelights there are two rows of small circular openings. Possibly the turrets were rebuilt at the same time.

NOTE.—Inventory 1551-2. The saide Commissioners haue deluyit at the tyme of sealing and deluyrie hereof to Bryan Lante, Edmund. Whalley, Robt. Birkenhead and John Bolton wardens, fawre belles, ij sakering belles.

Six bells hang in the tower four cast in 1601 by Henry Oldfielde of Nottingham, one of a family of five bell casters from 1539 to 1741. Two cast in 1816 by William Dobson of Downham Market, Norfolk (1806-1833), these cost £199—11—4.

The bells are now in a steel frame bedded into the tower as a memorial to the late Canon Wells, a procedure of which he would have entirely disapproved.

August 9th, 1943.

STANDISH, LANCASHIRE. St. Wilfred (rebuilt).

Glynne, when he visited the church remarked—

“The church has a west tower with spire, the steeple is part of the original church, with the exception of the spire, and consists of a tower, square below and octagonal above, with a Decorated west window, and plain door, and two-light belfry windows; on the embattled parapet are armorial bearings. The spire is lofty and seems to have been added when the body of the church was rebuilt, but the tower is low and small and scarcely rises above the clerestory, producing a rather awkward effect.”

Cheetham in his Lancashire guide says,

“The spire steeple was pulled down in 1867 and a taller one of the same type erected more in proportion with the 16th century nave.”

How far the rebuilding followed the old lines with exactness I do not know. The present octagonal belfry has a two-light window to each face with a pointed head and a

quatrefoil; the windows take up most of the face but there are no buttresses between. The parapet is embattled with a gargoyle to each angle.

NOTE.—Bells. Inventory 1551-2 delyvered to Rawf Baley, Thomas Johnson & Ewan Braudocke, Wardens, iij grete belles  
 iiij sacryng belles.  
 There are now 6 bells in the steeple.

#### WINWICK, LANCASHIRE. St. Oswald.

This fine church placed upon high ground is a conspicuous object in the surrounding landscape. The western tower standing upon a considerable elevation is of 14th century date and of three storeys in height, crowned with a stone spire. The material of which it is built is a friable yellowish sandstone in blocks averaging 17 ins. in depth and varying in length, this has not stood the smoke and chemical fumes to which it has been subjected in the 19th century and has a much decayed surface which has had to be cut away.

On plan the tower is about 26 ft. square, with walls varying in thickness from 5 ft. at the east to 6 ft. 6 ins. to the west. The west is supported by diagonal buttresses with over an eight ft. projection and close upon 3 ft. in width; these buttresses have an extra course of base moulding forming three slopes in place of two now much weathered, the upper two of cavetto form. The buttresses have five off-sets, all plain chamfers except the lowest which is a gable 21 ins. in height the weathering worn away. The external wall to the east has no projection, but to the north-east is a squared buttress descending upon the aisle wall, and on the south-east is a large square vice. The tower is without strings and the parapet has been renewed.

The north wall is plain except for the belfry window; the western facade however has an original doorway almost round-headed, enriched on the outside by two wave mouldings divided by a quirk. Above is a medium-sized window of three lights containing modern tracery, both window and doorway having weather mouldings. On either side of the window is a niche with an unspired canopy, the



north originally holding the statue of St. Oswald, the south that of St. Anthony, whose pig carved upon the wall nearby still remains. Above the window comes the first batter at the level of the ringers chamber; this has a window now covered by the face of the clock; a second batter follows at the base of the belfry, these batters show on the north, south and west of the tower. The belfry windows are placed too high, their apex almost touching the parapet: they are of two-lights with a quatrefoil in the head, and without weather mouldings. On the south side is a ringers window and in the south-east corner a fine vice projecting 50 ins. and 9 ft. in width. This has a batter at the level of the belfry window and then continues above the parapet in castellated form, having slit lights up the western corner. It is entered from inside through an excellent doorway with a shouldered head  $31\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide and including the surrounding chamfer 40 ins. There is a passage of three ft. before reaching the stairs which have steps 27 ins. long, 13 wide at the outside radius and are  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in depth with a 5 in. column in the centre. There are 82 steps and the complete height of the tower is about 62 ft. without the spire.

Inside the tower, the ground floor measures 13 ft. 10 ins each way, with a step up at the western doorway and two steps up to the nave; the western doorway is cut back 5 ft. and slightly chamfered to the door. The window above is treated in like manner without mouldings. The tower arch however is extremely beautiful, although not set quite centrally, so that the outer moulding inside the tower dies into the wall to the south, but is complete to the north with 4 ins. to spare. The arch is 9 ft. 6 ins. at its narrowest part and 13 ft. 10 ins. at its widest, being  $62\frac{1}{2}$  ins. through; it is enriched with three wave mouldings divided by two quirks on both sides; these mouldings are continuous without caps and the arch is finely proportioned and of excellent shape. By the edge of the steps inside may be discerned the base mould which has plain chamfers. The floors throughout are of timber, the lowest supported upon stone

corbels. In the ringers chamber only one window now admits light, that to the south; this is 46 ins. high, 16 wide, with a 5 ft. splay to the exterior wall. The belfry contains six bells now rung from the ground, these are placed in a wooden frame rather overcrowding the chamber. The belfry windows inside measure 66 ins. across and 10 ft. 2 ins. in height, the tracery placed 34 ins. back. The squinches supporting the angles of the spire are single arches in each corner without additional support. The top roof is 21 ft. 6 ins. each way inside the parapets. The spire as it emerges from the cemented top has 77 inch facets; it is divided into three stages by strings and has two sets of spirelights at the cardinal sides; the top stage has been renewed. The parapet wall is 11 inches thick and 49 ins. in height; the merlons 33 by 19, the embrasures 30 across. The moulding is continuous, Cheshire fashion, chamfered on both sides to a depth of 7 inches.

NOTE.—Inventory 1551-2. At the tyme of sealing & delu'ie hereof to the church wardens, Henry Sothworth, Charles Sothorne, Rauf Hasilhurste, Rauf Clayton and James Assheton, iiij belles wherof a clokke striketh upon one, j littill sanct belle & ij lyttle sacryng belles.  
There is now a peal of six recast in 1711 according to the dates upon them.

July 29th, 1943.

HODNET, SALOP. St. Luke (formerly SS. Peter & Paul).

Hodnet is a pleasant old-fashioned country town or village (unspoilt at the moment) containing a large church mainly of 14th century date unfortunately drastically restored and maltreated in the middle of the 19th century. The fabric's chief claim to interest now centres in its western tower, a building of octagonal shape from the ground upwards, rather resembling the tower of the crenellated manor house at Stokesay in the same county. At some period a structural settlement towards the south necessitated buttressing upon a large scale; a fissure now made up over the tower arch shows the need there was for abutment. The tower is designed in three storeys about sixty-three feet in height, and with the exception of the parapet is entirely of 14th

century construction. There is now no indication of a spire, but this may have been removed when the tower showed signs of disintegration, and the 15th century battlementing was erected as a finish to the tower.

On plan inside, the tower is 16 ft. 2 ins. in diameter anywhere across the octagon, the walls being 5 ft. 8 ins. in thickness producing a measurement of 27 ft. 6 ins. across the whole. Each side of the octagon within varies from 6 ft. 8 to 10 ins.; outside 9 ft. 5 or 6 ins. between the buttressing. These are placed at the angles where they project 29 ins. and are 21 ins. in breadth; they have five off-sets terminating below a string which marks off the belfry stage. Round the base of the tower is a double acutely-sloped chamfer which is three feet in height; to the west is a small doorway 26 ins. in width of late date which leads into a boiler chamber or rubbish hole. The three angles facing west have two series of narrow slit windows the lower with wave mouldings, the upper with chamfers. The lower windows are about six feet from the ground, 12 ins. wide and 49 ins. high; the glass is recessed 10 ins. back and is 6 ins. in width and 43 ins. high. The other five sides are windowless excepting a series of five slit windows lighting the internal vice towards the north-east corner. At ground level three things are noticeable. In the north-east corner there is a continuation of the nave wall to the corner buttress of the tower, which however quickly shelves back to the angle of the tower. In the south side the second buttress from the west is of later date and of great size, having a projection of 9 ft. 6 ins., nearly 4 ft. in breadth, erected to form an abutment against the settlement to the south. Eighteen inches beyond this buttress is the west wall of the south aisle which is joined to the tower at its centre. This wall is a thin one  $26\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide and seems modern, it is in strange contrast to the tower.

The belfry stage is octagonal in form, equal in proportion, without buttressing and separated from the rest of the masonry by a broad string. There are two-light windows to the cardinal sides with the usual 14th century quatrefoil

in the head framed with two chamfers without weather moulding. The alternate sides of the octagon are blank but of the same width. Above is the 15th century battlemented parapet with continuous moulding, Cheshire fashion. The parapet starts from a string which has a gargoyle in the centre of each side. The parapet from inside is 5 ft. 7 ins. in height, the merlons 25 ins. high and 28 ins. wide; the openings vary in width. The tower is constructed of red sandstone of seemingly durable quality, set upon level beds but of variable size and is ashlar-faced both within and without.

Inside, the tower is uniform in character, the arch into the nave although not large is finely proportioned, well-moulded on its eastern face in waves and quirks, the remainder of the arch is cut straight through the full width of the octagon side. The three west windows although but six inches wide at the glass are splayed out nearly four feet at the interior wall-face, with a low semi-circular head enriched with a moulding. There is no attempt at vaulting, the first storey being ceiled by a flat timber roof. Inside the south aisle are further abutments and attempts at strengthening the tower; for 4 ft. 7 ins. the wall is thickened-out two feet, then comes another large buttress 27 ins. thick, 4 ft. 3 ins. against the thickened wall and 5 ft. 11 ins. against the next piece of walling. There is another small buttress which finishes under the aisle roof just where the arcade starts between nave and south aisle. The nave is 21 ft. 2 ins. across.

The vice doorway in the north-east part of the tower is acutely pointed and decorated with a wave moulding, including this it is 28 ins. in width with a 22 inch passage through a 15 inch wall, where the first step of the vice is immediately on the right. The steps, 85 in number, 24 ins. across, 11 ins. in width at the outside edge, and 8 in. in depth lead to the ringers chamber, now disused, the belfry and the roof. The bells at present are rung from the ground, unfortunately they are hung in an iron cage and the belfry windows are boarded-up except for their top arches, pre-

sumably to throw the sound upwards. The windows are six feet in width and inside measure 20 ins. to the tracery. The bells are six in number.

May 13th, 1943.

LEEK, STAFFS. St. Edward the Confessor.

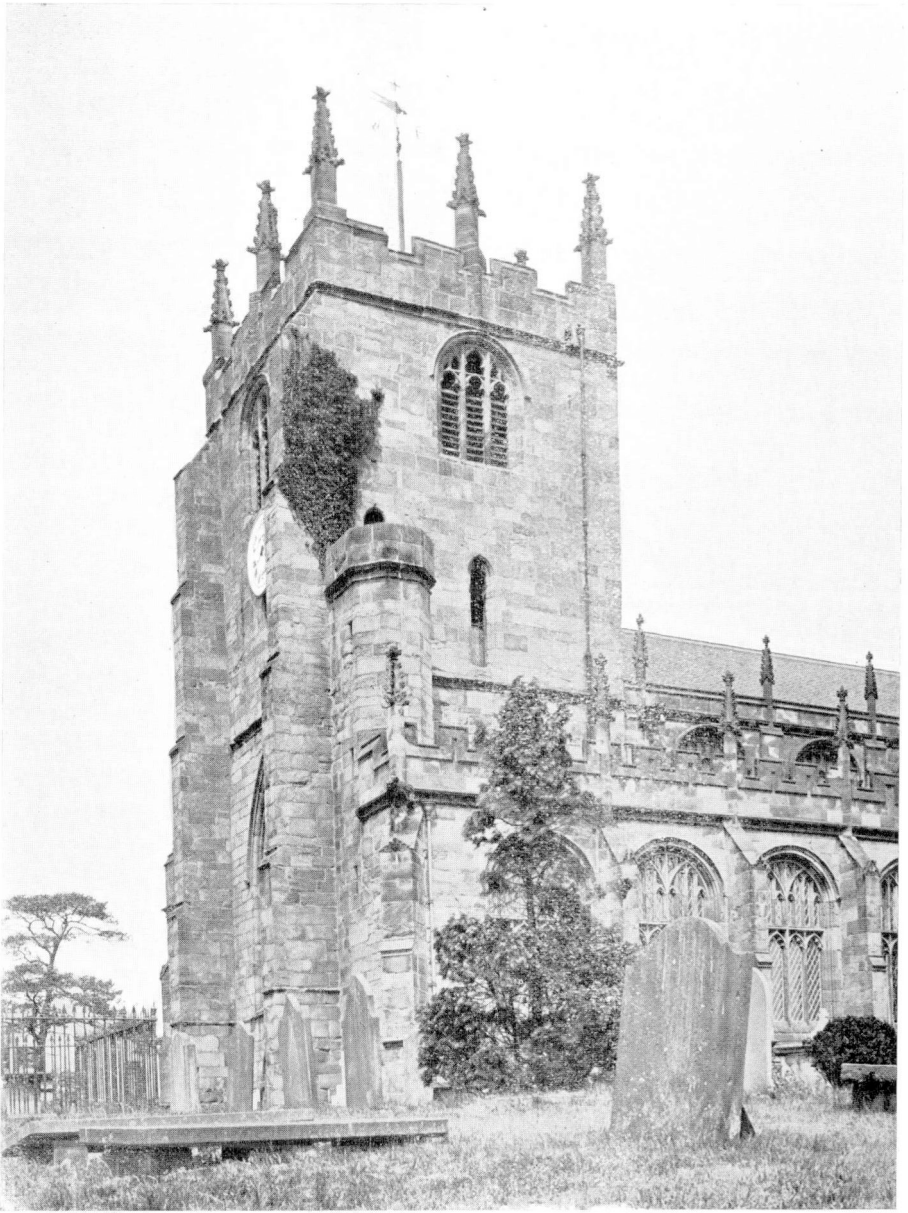
Leek has a fine sturdy 14th century western tower with later parapets. On plan it measures about 27 ft. square with walls from 42 to 48 ins. in thickness, the tower being about 66 ft. in height; it is therefore broad and massive and rather short for its lay-out. It stands upon the top of a hill in the centre of the town and is constructed of gritstone, similar to the tower at Astbury.<sup>1</sup> The masonry of the walls is made of stones of large size, 60 by 18 and 51 by 21 being average sizes; the buttresses however are built with small stones and do not appear to be bonded into the main walls, they are in fact extremely spare for the tower they support. Four-square at the corners they extend with five straight-sloped off-sets to the parapet string, and the base moulds do not synchronize with those of the main walls but are a little higher. This base consists of two straight chamfers altogether 27 ins. in depth. The buttresses vary in projection from 56 to 41 ins. and are only 17 inches in breadth. As is so often the case in the district under consideration there is an absence of strings, the only one is under the belfry windows.

The west face of the tower has an original 14th century doorway enriched with wave mouldings, the opening not more than six feet across. Within, the retaining arch is round-headed and coeval, not Norman as is sometimes stated. Above this doorway is a modern two-light window of small dimensions. The ringers chamber exhibits a square-headed slit light and below the belfry windows is a string ornamented with demi-angels. The belfry has dual two-light windows placed side by side with quatrefoiled

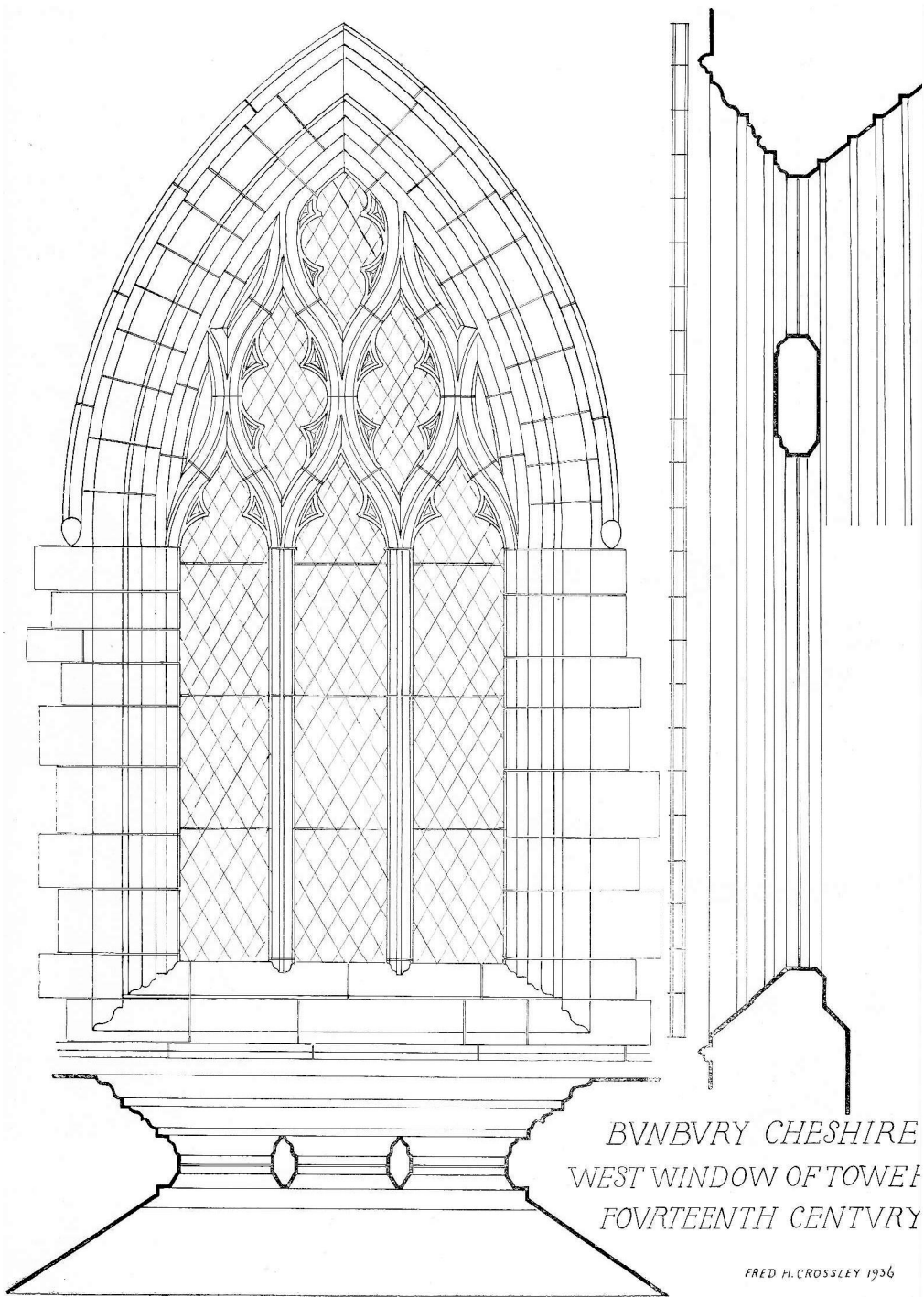
<sup>1</sup>—The top layer of the quarry has been used as at Astbury, giving the appearance of sandstone; this top layer is unsuitable for construction and shales away by the action of frost or wet.

heads and weather mouldings; they are eleven feet across the two. The north and south faces of the tower are plain, but the north side has a ringers window. The top finish of the tower is 15th century. First comes the usual 15th century band or ornament composed of diagonal quatrefoils, completed above by a string and a battlemented parapet with eight pinnacles, which have been renewed. The parapet is 63 ins. above the leads, the centre merlons, which include pinnacles, are 57 ins. across, the rest 41 in., and all are 29 ins. in height, moulded along the top edge. The embrasures are 27 ins. across, moulded similarly. The parapet wall is  $10\frac{1}{2}$  ins. thick, the moulded head 14 by 14 with a straight slope outwards and a chamfer inwards. The leads measure 25 ft. north to south and 24 ft. east to west. The vice is placed in the south-east corner and a small doorway with four steps before it admits to the staircase from without. The vice is lit by slit-lights placed in the southern face in a 15 inch wall.

Inside the tower the north and south walls have the same masonry as outside, large closely jointed blocks of excellent masoncraft. The west wall however is different. Here the stones are smaller, unevenly placed with wide joints; it is an earlier wall of 13th century date, and the small tower arch confirms this, for the caps and bases though simple and much mutilated are distinctly 13th century in design. The arch and its responds have chamfers divided by quirks, the wall however is only three feet in thickness. In the south-east corner the tower wall is splayed off for the vice, the lower part of the splay cut away on account of the arch, but above it is projected layer by layer until it is again complete. Here is the original entrance through a two-foot wide doorway with a chamfer round it, but inside it is now separated from the stairs by a wall. The vice is five feet across and has 84 steps 27 ins. in length, 13 at the outside radius and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in depth. The first storey is the ringers chamber, the floor of which has been raised at least six steps above the doorway. It measures the same as the ground floor 19 ft. 6 ins. across; there are three slit-lights, which



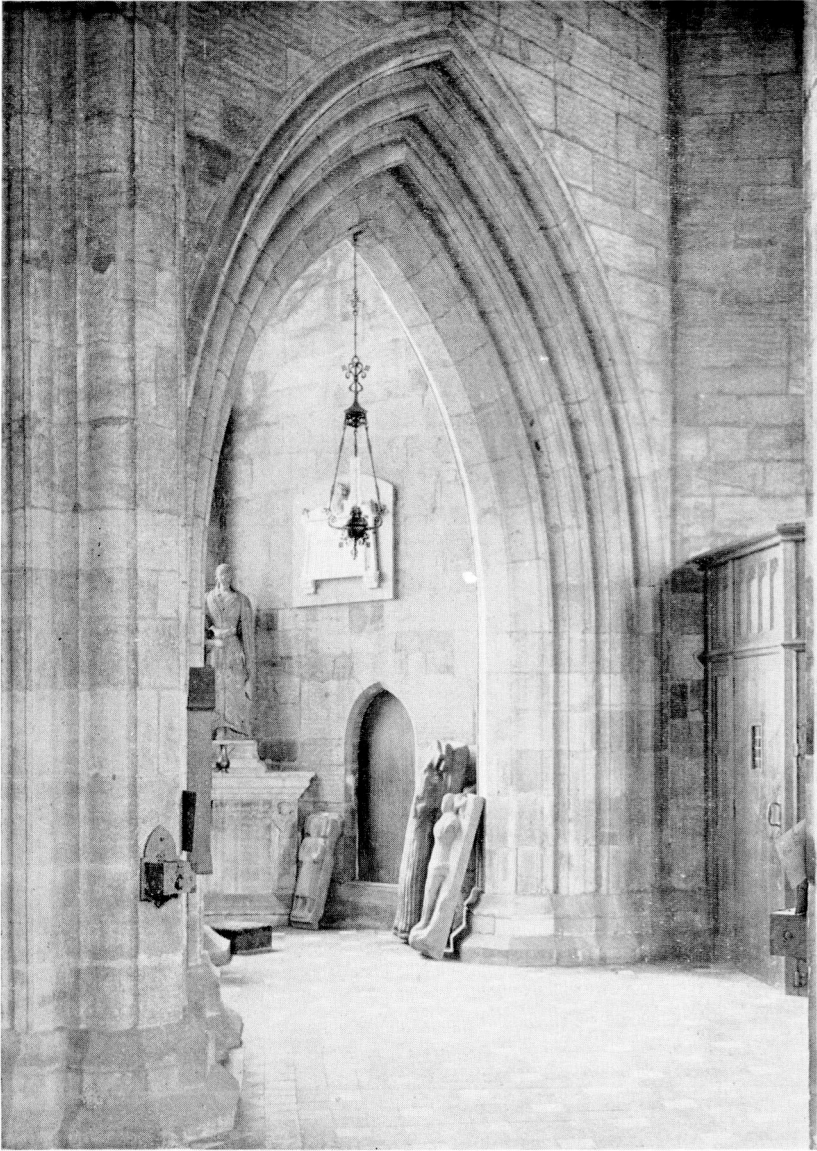
Cheshire Bunbury from the south west.



*BUNSBURY CHESHIRE  
WEST WINDOW OF TOWER  
FOURTEENTH CENTURY*

FRED H. CROSSLEY 1936

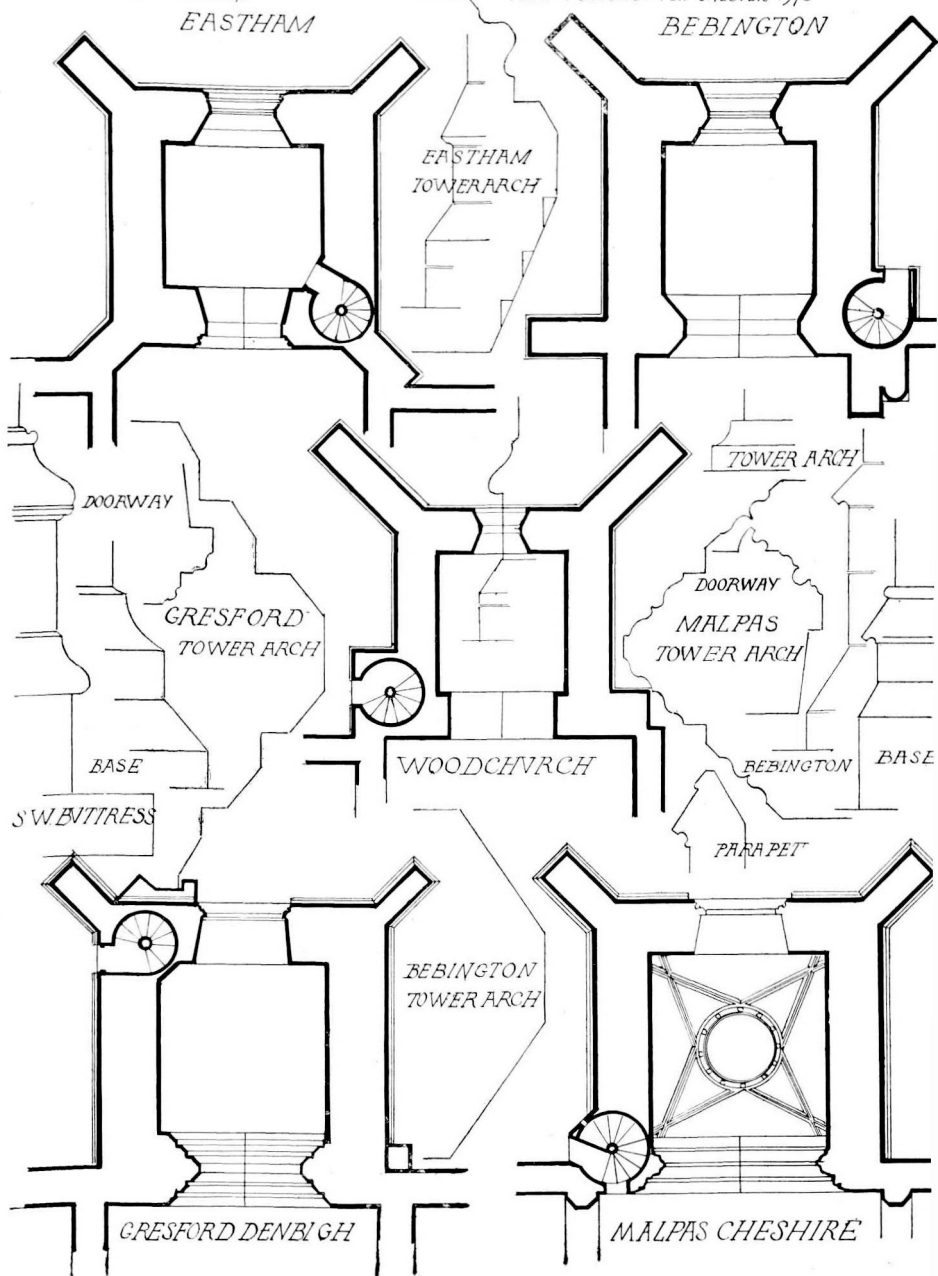


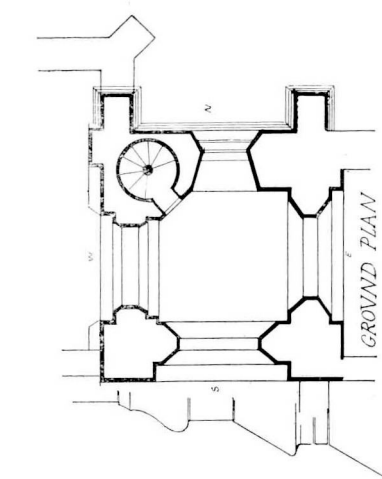


Cheshire Bunbury southern arch of tower.

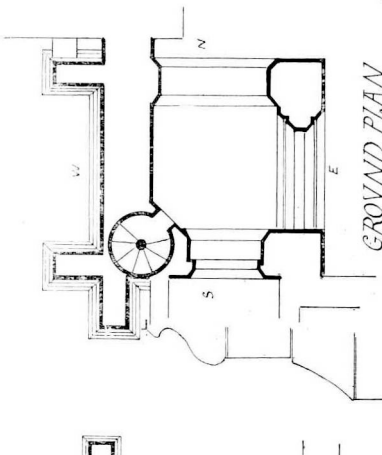
14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY STEEPLE PLANNING IN CHESHIRE ETC

SCALE 1/4" DETAIL 1/8" FRED H. CROSSLEY F.S.A. CHESTER 1973

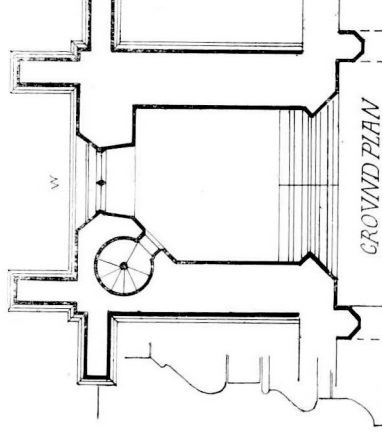




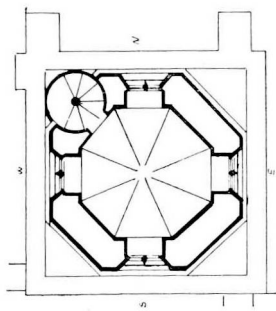
GROUN PLAN



GROUN PLAN

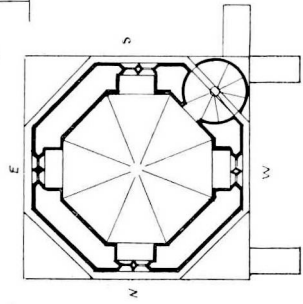


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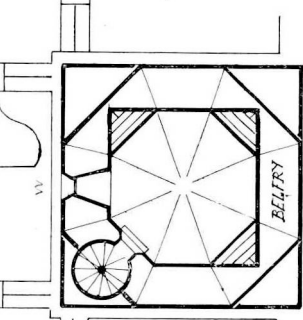


FRED H. GOSNELL F.S.R.  
GROUN PLAN

BELLERY



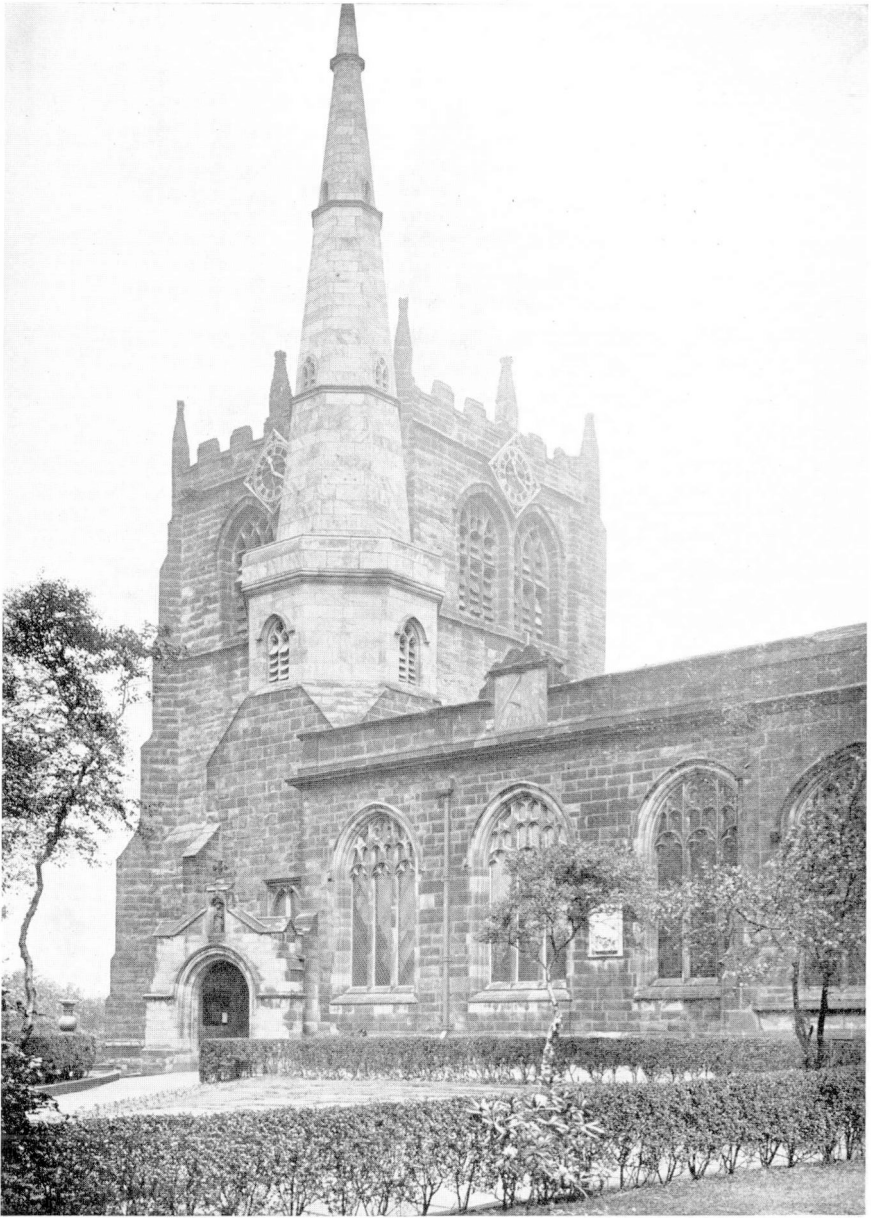
BELLERY



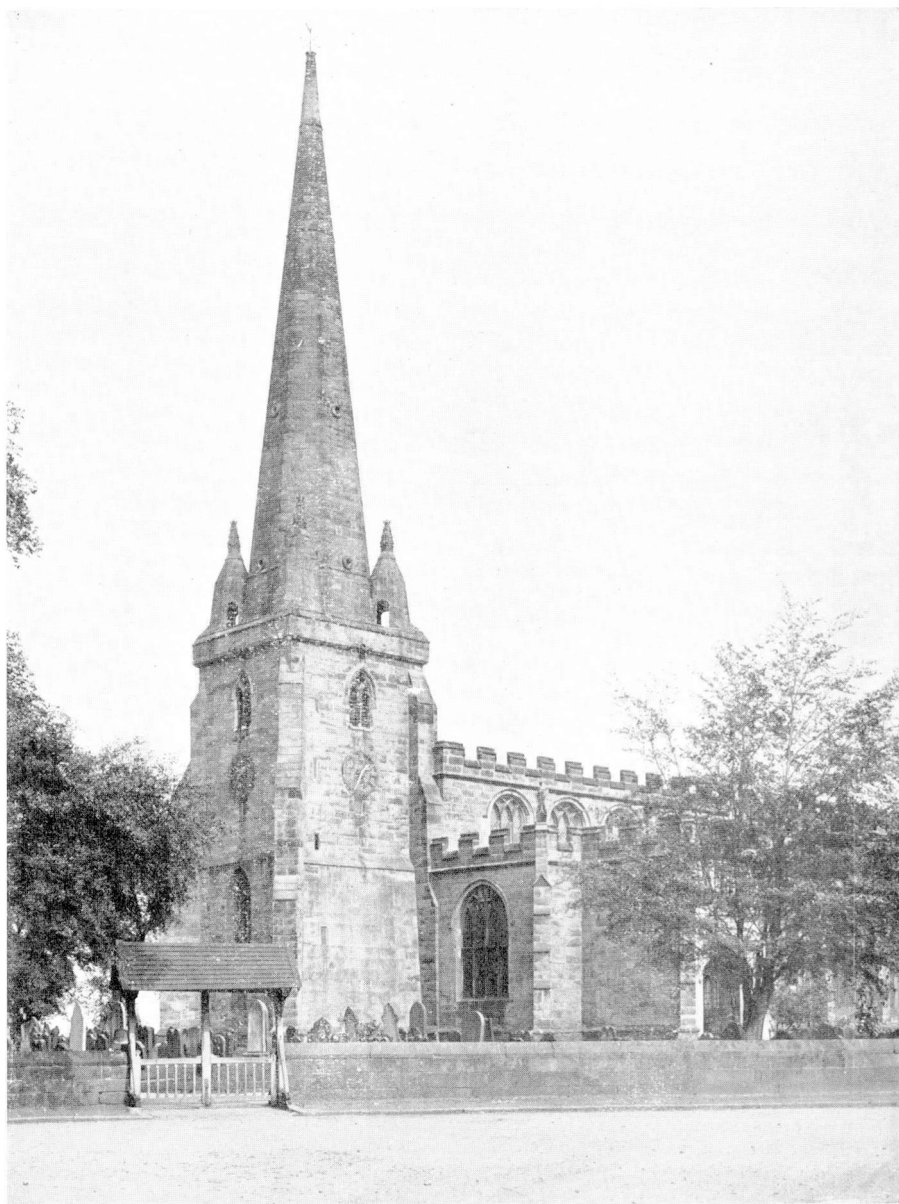
RINGERS CHAMBER

HALSALL LANCASHIRE ORMSKIRK LANCASHIRE AVUGHTON LANCAS





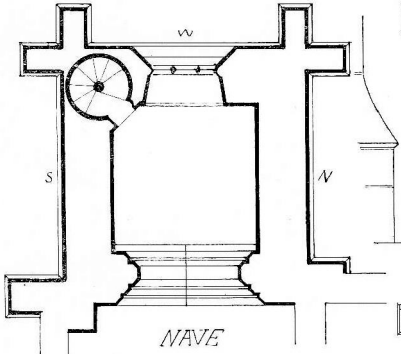
Lancashire Ormskirk from the south east.



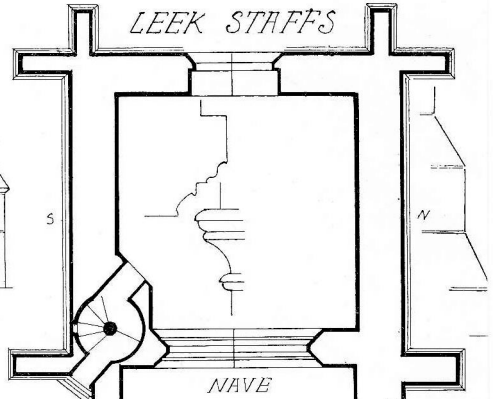
Lancashire Sephton from the south west.

14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY TOWER PLANS IN THE CHESHIRE DISTRICT

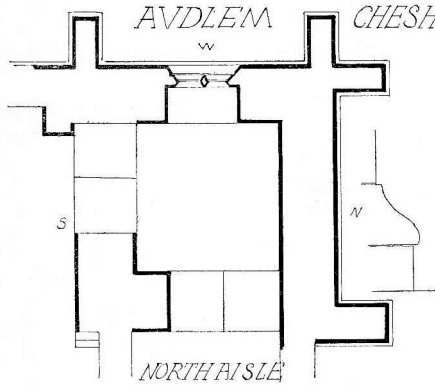
MUCKLESTONE STAFFS



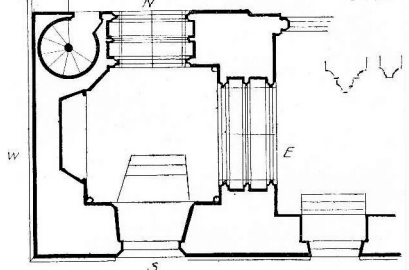
LEEK STAFFS



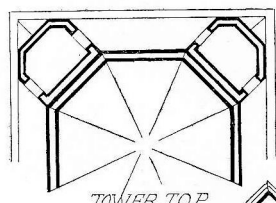
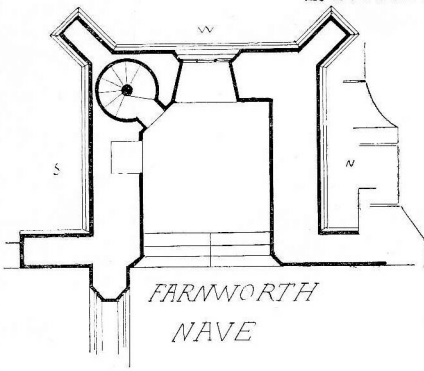
AVDLEM CHESHIRE



CHESTER HOLY TRINITY 1860



LANCASHIRE



SEPHTON

SCALE 1/4 DETAIL 1/2

FRED H CROSSLEY FSA  
CHESTER AUGUST 1913



at the glass measure 44 by 16 ins. and at the inside wall 55 by 38, the splay being 33 ins. and the outside 9, making the wall 42 ins. in thickness at this height of the tower. The lights west and north are open to the light, but the east light now looks into the church, which it did not do before the nave roof was raised. The clock house has a doorway to the leads of the nave roof and is modern. The belfry shows no signs of the tower ever having a spire and there is no appearance of squinches. There are now ten bells placed in a steel frame. To drown the sound a little the windows have been almost closed and their lower portion bricked-up.

NOTE.—Inventory 1551-2. Delyvered to William Smithe, Roffe Cocke, Thomas Jolley and William Byrche churchwardens ij belles in the Stepull.

1893.—Eight bells, 6 by Rudall dated 1721 and 2 dated 1863.

1943.—Ten belles rehung in 1907.

July 9th, 1943.

#### MUCKLESTONE, STAFFS. St. Mary.

Apart from the fabric, the tower of Mucklestone is of historical interest for it is said that from the top of it Queen Margaret watched the defeat of her forces, two miles away, at Blore Heath, on Sept. 23rd, 1459. It was also a Mucklestone smith who reversed the shoes of Queen Margaret's horses when the battle was lost five centuries ago. This well-designed and excellently proportioned 14th century tower is all that is now left of the mediæval church, the rest was rebuilt first in 1790 and again in 1883 and now contains nothing of historical or mediæval interest. The tower is however worth a visit. It is constructed of grey stone in fairly large closely-jointed blocks of which many average 36 by 16 ins. and is set out in four storeys with four-square buttressing to the west having five off-sets of a straight splay. To the east, the buttressing which in its lower part is four-square becomes diagonal at the height of the church roof.

The base mould of the tower has a single splay slightly curved which follows round the buttresses; the west face

has no doorway but a three-light window, the cill 8 ft. from the ground, and 5 ft. 10 ins. in breadth. Lighting the first storey on three sides, but not to the west, is a narrow window with a trefoiled head; the eastern light is closed but can be seen within the church. These windows are 15 ins. in width by 40 ins. in height; inside, they are set 41 ins. from the interior edge with a slight splay. Above the windows is the first string of bull-nosed form. The second storey has three similar windows, the eastern one again closed. Within, the timber floor between the storeys is missing. The second string is cavetto-shaped and is immediately beneath the belfry windows. These are of good shape, of three lights, 5 ft. 6 ins. in width and 10 ft. in height, having quatrefoils in the arched heads which are completed by weather mouldings, absent elsewhere. The western buttresses terminate at the level of the parapet string, the eastern ones a little lower. The parapet is of late 16th century date with corner pinnacles enriched with blind tracery. The battlemented parapet is 58 ins. in height, the merlons 34 across and 21 high, the embrasures 18 ins. across; the mouldings are not continuous in the Cheshire manner and the parapets are not splayed upon both sides, the stonework being 9 ins. in thickness.

On plan the tower is 21 ft. 6 ins. square with walls 60 ins. in thickness. In the south-west corner is an internal vice approached from inside by a doorway  $22\frac{1}{2}$  ins. wide, placed in an angle wall and enriched with a decorated moulding. The diameter of the vice is 52 ins., with steps 24 across and 12 wide on the outside radius and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  deep. There are 89 steps and with the parapet the tower is 60 ft. 6 ins. in height. The vice is lit by four slit lights with splayed sides, about 14 ins. through the wall. In the belfry chamber in each upper corner are arched squinches forming a perfect octagon for a spire which must once have enriched the structure, and was probably removed when the present parapets were erected in 1590. The leads above measure 20 ft. 6 ins. square, the vice turret continued to the full height of the parapets.



The bells, five in number, are hung in a wooden frame and are now rung from the ground floor. There is no vault, all the floors being of timber. The tower arch is 8 ft. at its narrowest and 13 at its widest, the moulding consisting of three chamfers divided by two quirks. The arch is well shaped and has simple caps and bases, the former hacked away where they were originally extended along the west wall of the nave. At the south-east corner the eastern buttress of the tower comes down into the church, but the north-east rests upon the new wall of the arcade. The buttressing has a general projection of 36 ins. and is 24 ins. across, measurements however which vary a little. The nave is 16 ft. 6 ins. at the tower arch.

NOTE.—At the suppression Mucklestone had “iij grett belles”. Delivered to Thomas Asheby & Rauf Lyghtfoote churchwardens of Mukleston iij belles in the Steeple & a Sawance [Sacrance, sacring or sanctus] belle. There are now 5 bells 1, 2, 3, and 5 dated 1742 made by Abel Rudall and no 4 cast 1858.

June 15th, 1943.

#### STAFFORD. St. Mary.

This large collegiate church constructed principally in the late twelfth century, has a crossing and central tower, upon which in the fourteenth century was placed an octagonal belfry crowned by an exceedingly tall and graceful timber spire, destroyed by a storm in 1594. With the lower portion of the tower we have really little to do for it is before our period. Nevertheless it is a fine example of its style, with four arches of excellent shape, many shafted piers with elaborate caps and bases. On the west side above the arch is a continuous arcading of six, over which the roof line of the nave in the 12th century may be observed. The plan of the central tower covers an area of 35 ft. 8 ins. across, with walls 90 ins. in thickness. This is gradually reduced as it ascends by batters or slopes, the first occurring immediately above the apex of the arches forming the base of the continuous arcade, so that what began at 90 ins. in thickness finishes at 48 ins. The approach to the tower is

by a vice placed in the south-west corner of the rebuilt south transept, continuing along a passage behind the arcade above the tower arch and into the ringers chamber. This portion of the tower is now within the church itself and is about 20 ft. internally, with walls 84 ins. in thickness. At the present time it is virtually in darkness, having no exterior windows; the chamber is a high one but without any characteristic features. A vice in the north-west corner of the tower finishes at the level of the clock house.

This room is about 12 ft. in height and is lit by a quatrefoil window placed in each face of the wall and is of 14th century date. Internally the windows are 54 ins. across and 56 ins. in height with shouldered lintels, the moulding continued along the splay which is 42 ins. to the glass. Outside, they are 42 ins. wide and 47 high, set back 18 ins. and completed by a horizontal weather mould with large label stops. On the exterior the ringers chamber measures 32 ft. 9 ins. across each side and the tops of the sloping heads of buttresses 33 ins. wide appear above the church roofs. From the nave clerestory gutter this wall is 63 ins. in height to a batter or deep chamfer 2 ft. in depth and receding 20 ins. to the wall of the clock house which measures 30 ft. across and 7 ft. 7 ins. in height to the final splay. Inside, there is a vice in the south-west corner starting in the clock house and finishing in the belfry, but this is now bricked up at both ends and the present access is by a wooden stair of 16 treads, 9 inches in depth.

The octagonal belfry is set upon a square and joined to it by a considerable slope which includes the cills of the belfry windows and continues without a break from corner to corner. Outside, the octagon appears to be equal-sided but is not so in its lower half within. This is occasioned by the dual two-light windows on the cardinal faces, the measurements being 10 ft. 9½ ins. on the cardinal sides and 6 ft. 9 ins. at the angles. The discrepancy is rectified above the windows by bringing forward the angles and recessing the wall above the windows in an ingenious way. The belfry is about 23 ft. 6 ins. in height, 20 ft. across, with

walls 4 ft. in thickness. The windows are each 51 ins. wide and 11 ft. 8 ins. to the apex of the arch; each light is 15 ins. across, the mullion 8 ins., the stonework between the dual windows 15 ins. across.

The belfry contains 10 bells hung in a stout timber frame four feet in height, the base beams 12 by 9 ins., the framing 9 by 4½ ins. One of the bells is dated 1692. The approach to the roof is by a ladder and trap door. The roof is about 24 ft. 6 ins. across, the parapet 51 ins. in height and 15 in thickness; the merlons 40 by 22 ins., the corner ones 20 by 22 ins.; the embrasures 20½ ins. At each corner is a pinnacle whose shaft is 14 ins. in diameter and 6 ft. 5 ins. in height. The exterior stonework is built of a cold grey uninteresting stone and has been greatly renewed and rebuilt, including the four great pinnacles placed at each corner round the octagon. Great liberties have been taken with renewals which in every case have been restoration not repair and the details now differ considerably from what was there before the work was put in hand. The former parapet was pierced work without pinnacles but the band of enrichment below it seems to have been there; the windows had no mullions but may of course originally have had them and the carving is altogether surmise. Nevertheless the general effect is excellent and must have been splendid before the destruction of the spire. The octagon although not as large as at Nantwich is of sufficient size, 29 ft. across, not to be dwarfed by the church below it. When the spire was in position the large corner pinnacles would carry the line down to the main body of the tower and form a beautiful composition. The total height of the central tower from the ground to the top of the parapets is about 96 feet.

August 5th, 1943.

