

WOTTON CHURCH.  
(From a photograph by Rose, Dorking.)

# Surrey Collections.

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## WOTTON CHURCH.

BY

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**I**n the *Domesday Book*, which was the result of the Survey made in 1086, the Manor of Odestone or Wotton is returned as having been held in the time of King Edward Confessor by one Heraldus; it was now held by Oswald, one of the King's thanes. The Jury of the Hundred declare that they know not by what tenure Heraldus held it. It was not worth as much, at the time of the Survey, as it was in the time of King Edward, as was so commonly the case. There is no mention of a church, which is remarkable. Speaking generally, the non-mention of a church in *Domesday* is not necessarily a proof that one did not then exist. No instructions were given to the Commissioners to report the existence of churches, and it was therefore likely that the returns in this respect would vary, as indeed they did. One church only is returned in Cambridge-shire, and none in Lancashire, Cornwall, or even in Middlesex. As churches are mentioned as existing in most of the neighbouring places, as:—Abinger, Shere, Albury, Dorking, Mickleham, Buckland, Betchworth, and others, it is remarkable that the one at Wotton should not also be mentioned, if there were one there.

The advowson of the church appears from the first to have gone with the manor, and to have continued so

to the present time. In the time of King John the manor was held by Ralph de Camois. In the time of Edward II Lord Latimer presented to the church, and it remained in his presentation till 1337, when Queen Philippa who held the wardship of the heir presented twice. Then for a time the Bishop of Winchester's Registers are lost. In 1373 Lord Latimer presented, and in 1382 the advowson is again with Lord Camois. With the manor it passed through various hands, until in 1579 it came into possession of George Evelyn, Esquire, and has remained in the family ever since.

The church itself has many points of interest.

The tower is the oldest part. It is not square. The width from north to south is greater than the length from east to west. The north, south, and east sides appear of the same date, but the west side appears to be later. The arch on the east side is exceedingly plain and the masonry very rough. The stones of which it is built vary in size, some of them being very large, and they are roughly cut. There are no mouldings. The imposts are quite plain, with the lower edge plainly chamfered; they are continued a short distance along the face of the wall. The soffit of the arch is set back from the line of the jambs some six or eight inches. The doorway on the south side is even plainer, not having any imposts at all. There is a semi-circular headed light above this doorway, not in the centre, which is deserving of notice. The lower part of the north and south walls is thicker than the upper part. In the west wall of the tower is a plain, pointed arch, with the jambs and soffit composed of roughly cut stones with square edges. The imposts are similar to those of the eastern arch; they also are continued along the face of the wall.

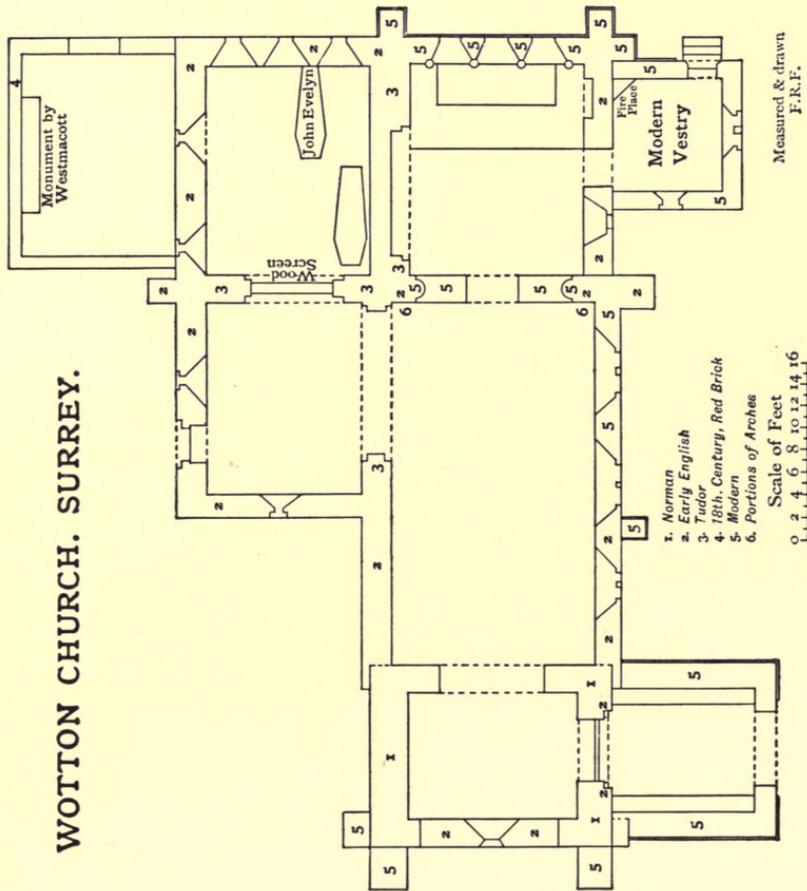
Opinions as to the age of this tower differ considerably. I offer the opinion that it is of Early Anglo-Norman date and character, that is, shortly after the date of the *Domesday Book*. It has been suggested that originally the eastern wall formed the division between the nave and the chancel, and that the western wall



WOTTON CHURCH, WEST END, INTERIOR.

*(From a photograph by Walker & Cockerell, London.)*

# WOTTON CHURCH. SURREY.



was built afterwards, forming it into a central tower, with chancel, and probably an apse to the east, and a nave to the west, and a doorway to the south. There are now no evidences above ground of this nave. It would be well if some slight examination of the ground were undertaken to endeavour to ascertain its size. This would not be costly, and would not disturb the graves.

That was without doubt the form of the church when, in the 13th century, it was remodelled. The nave was then removed and the western arch of the tower was built up, a small lancet light being inserted in the upper part of the blocking. It should be noted that this arch is not quite in the centre, it is placed a little too much to the north—a few inches. The pointed apex and the imposts are distinctly visible inside the tower. They can also be seen among the ivy outside. The chancel also was removed, and the whole of the new church was built to the east of the tower, much as we now see it. The walls of the nave were built projecting a little beyond the exterior of the tower so as to give greater internal width. They are bonded into the tower by rough stonework, which, at first sight, appears to be a buttress of the date of the tower. For this purpose old stones appear to have been used. The walls are thinner than those of the tower. There is not much of interest in the nave. There is a pair of lancets in the south wall towards the west end. The large windows are recent insertions.

There is a chancel to the east which terminates in a square end, and when the church was restored in 1858 portions of the original group of three lancets were found. The present lancets are modern, inserted at the restoration in place of a single three-light window then existing. On the south side are a pair of lancets, and a single larger lancet with a low side window beneath. There is also a recess for a seat for the minister, and a piscina in the east wall; a not very common situation in a parish church. The large arch across the chancel is modern. On each side of it, in the face of the wall, will be noticed portions of small arches. Previous to the

building of the present arch there was a small one in the centre, and the small ones now indicated, were covered with plaster. I have not been able to obtain much information about them. They are suggestive of an arcade of three arches, or of a central arch, with an opening on each side, which is occasionally found in Norman and Early English churches.<sup>1</sup>

On the north side of the nave and chancel was built a short aisle or chapel with a chancel to the east. The original arch into the aisle of this chancel can be traced in the wall; it was much larger than the present one. In this aisle or chapel are a lancet light to the west and one to the north. It may be noticed that these lights have a rebate on the outside for the wood frame of a window. There is no such rebate to the lancet lights in the other parts of the church, suggesting that the windows in this aisle were the only ones provided with glass. The north and the west, to which these lights look, are the most exposed to rough weather. There is a pointed recessed doorway also in the north wall. In the east wall of the chancel to this aisle is a group of three lancet lights, quite plain, with the sides plainly chamfered; there is no hood moulding. There are also two lancet lights in the north wall. What was the arrangement for division between this aisle or chapel and the nave is not now evident.

This was the church of the 13th century.

The great altar in the principal chancel was dedicated to S. John the Evangelist; the altar in the north chancel was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At a much later period a further rearrangement took place, and the present arches between the aisle and the nave, and between the aisle and its chancel, were inserted. The character of the mouldings is of the Tudor period. The two periods, the Early English and Tudor, are distinctly marked, for there is a plain string-course

<sup>1</sup> Instances of this arrangement exist at Barfreton, Kent; Ashley, Hants; Elton, Durham; of Norman date: and at Capel le Ferne, Kent; and Otterbourne, Hants; of Early English date.



WOTTON CHURCH, EAST END, INTERIOR.  
*(From a photograph by Walker & Cockerell, London)*

along the older wall of the aisle and its chancel, which is not continued along the later work. The chancel of the aisle as then arranged has been used as a mortuary chapel by the Evelyn family, and contains many monuments of great interest. The oak screen, which crosses the arch into this mortuary chapel, bears the date 1632.

There are in the tower three small bells: two of them are described by Stahlschmidt as of the latter part of the 14th century. The third bell bears the date 1602.

The inscriptions run:—

1. Ora mente pia pro nobis Virgo Maria.
2. Johannes Cristi care<sup>1</sup> dingnare pro nobis orare.
3. Our help is in the Lord.

In the inventory of 6 Edw. VI, 3 bells are mentioned. So that the third appears to have been recast.

There is no staircase to the tower; this is usual in Norman churches. The font is modern. A marble one of the 17th century, is preserved in the Evelyn Chapel. It is a circular basin supported on a circular pedestal. There is a vestry of modern date built against the south side of the chancel. The porch of the church is modern. The outside of the doorway, from the porch to the tower, is of a later date than the tower itself. At the restoration it was found thickly coated with plaster, which was cleared away. The stones of which it is built are alternately chalk and firestone. A similar arrangement is also found inside the church.

The Registers of Baptisms and Burials commence in 1596, and of marriages in 1603.

The Communion plate is of 17th century date.

In the 6th Edw. VI, at the visitation by the King's Commissioners, there were found to be in the church—

- A chalice worth by estimacion £3.
- A cross of copper.
- An olde white cope.
- A vestment and albe.

<sup>1</sup> ? cura.

One surplice.  
 An altar cloth.  
 A sepulchre cloth.

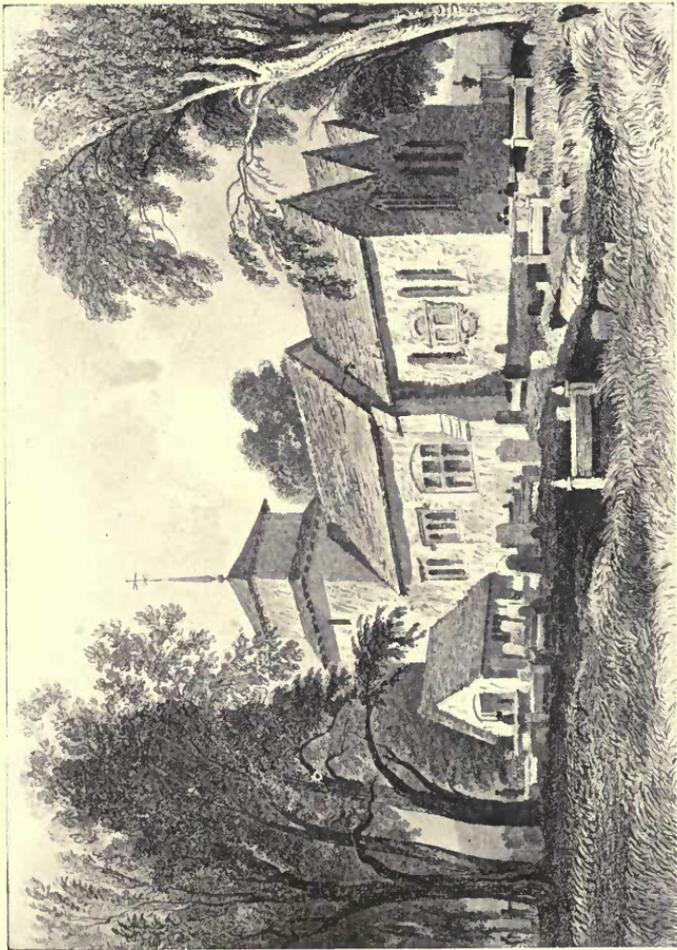
And it was found that there had been stolen—

A pair of latten sensers.  
 Two candlesticks of latten.  
 A cross cloth of red sarcynett.  
 A cope of green silk with a vestment of the same.  
 Two cloths of green silk.  
 A cope of white tuke with a vestment of the same.

The most interesting event connected with this church is the burial here of John Evelyn, so well known as the author of *Evelyn's Diary*, and also of a valuable work on "Forest Trees," entitled *Sylva*, which caused him to be known and spoken of during his life as "Sylva Evelyn." He was a "persona grata" at Court, and a good man at a time when virtue was not altogether the fashion. He died in London 27th February, 1705-6, in his 86th year, and was brought to Wotton for burial. His monument is the coffin-shaped stone lying in the Evelyn chapel under the east window. It bears a long inscription, which it is hardly necessary to give here as it has frequently been printed. His wife survived him three years, dying on 9th February, 1708-9. Her tomb, also coffin-shaped, is placed near that of her husband, and from the inscription it appears that she lies in the tomb itself. There are many other interesting memorials here to members of the family, but I do not propose to say more about them.

On the north side of this chapel, an additional mausoleum of brick has been built for the family. In it is a large white marble monument by Westmacott, to the memory of the father of the present esteemed owner of Wotton. The inscription was written by Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby. It occurs in Stanley's *Life of Arnold*.

John Evelyn in his *Diary* gives some notes in reference to the church which are of interest. When he



WOTTON CHURCH BEFORE ITS RESTORATION IN 1858.

(From an old Engraving.)

had arrived at the mature age of four years, he was instructed in the rudiments of learning by one, Frier by name, in the porch of Wotton Church. At that time it was usual for the school of a village to be held in the porch or tower of the parish church. He speaks of the funerals of several members of his family, who were buried here. These must have been very imposing scenes. They took place mostly at night. Under date 1641, Jan. 2, he says:—"We at night followed the mourning hearse to the church at Wotton, where, after a sermon and funeral oration, my father was interred near his formerly erected monument." When his own brother Richard died in 1698, he tells us "he was buried with extraordinary solemnity, rather as a nobleman, than as a private gentleman. There were over 2,000 persons present; all the gentlemen of the county doing him the last honours."

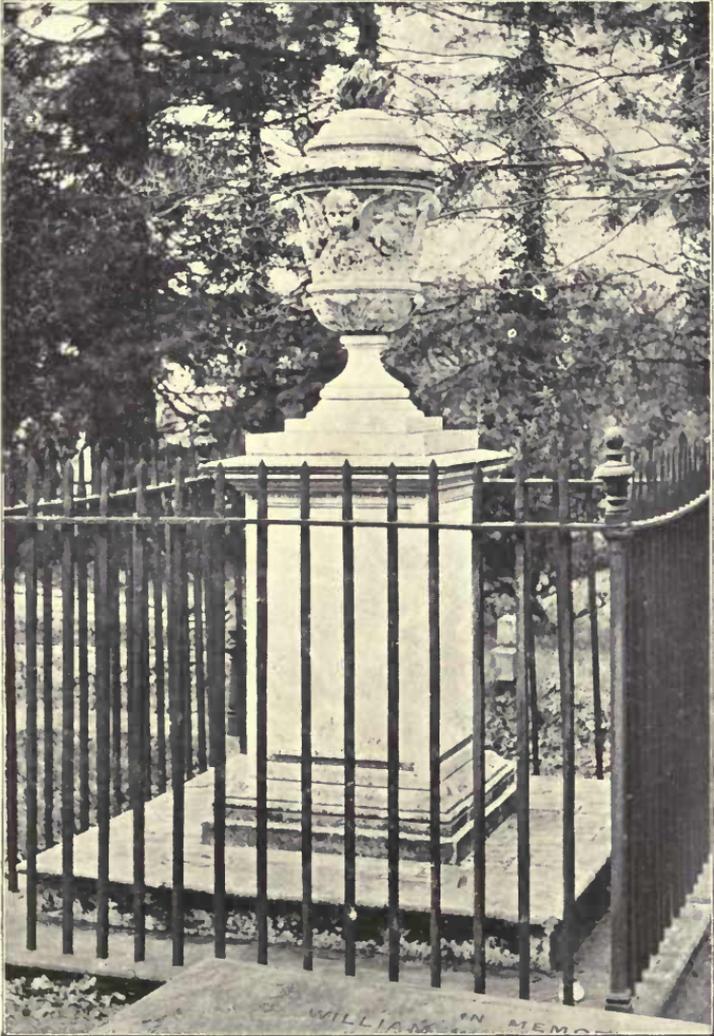
He tells us something of the Rectors of Wotton. There was a succession of three Rectors of the name Hyham or Heyham, grandfather, father, and son, extending over a period of 100 years. The first, Robert, was instituted May 3rd, 1583. The next, George Hyham, was instituted July 10th, 1612. He baptized John Evelyn in 1620, and the latter speaks of him more than once as "that good old man." 1654, Oct. 24:—"The good old parson Hyham preached at Wotton Church: a plaine preacher, but innocent and honest man." The next one, the son of the former, he speaks of under date 1684, May 11:—"Visited Mr. Hyham, who was ill, and died 3 days after."<sup>1</sup> The next rector was Wm. Duncombe, instituted July 2nd, 1684. He does not appear to have been a very satisfactory person, but he was probably as good as most of that day. Under date 1694, May 6:—"This being the first Sunday in the month, the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ought to have been celebrated at Wotton Church, but in this parish it is exceedingly neglected, so that unless at the four great feasts there is no communion hereabouts." And the next

<sup>1</sup> This family history covers a hiatus in the Registers at Winchester.

year, 1695, Easter Day, he records:—"Mr. Duncombe, parson of this parish preach'd, which he hardly comes to do above once a year, though but 7 or 8 miles off: a florid discourse read out of his notes. The Holy Sacrament followed, which he administered with very little reverence, leaving out many prayers and exhortation, nor was there any oblation."

The next Rector held the living not quite 11 months. This was Roger Wye, M.A., previously Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He was instituted March 28th, 1699, and died February 16th, 1700. Manning and Bray speak of his monument as on the south side of the church. I do not find it. John Evelyn speaks of him as "a very worthy man." The next presentation was made by John Evelyn himself. He gave the living to Dr. Ralph Bohun, LL.D., Fellow of New College, Oxford. He had been tutor to Evelyn's son for five years, ending 1671, during which time he had lived in the family; he then returned to Oxford. He was instituted to the living, August 18th, 1701. He died 12th July, 1716, and was buried in Wotton Church. A tablet to his memory is fixed at the east end of the north wall of the chancel. It appears from the inscription that he was also a Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral. From the inscription, he appears to have left the sum of £20 for the poor, and a similar sum for the decoration of the altar. Evelyn speaks of him as "a learned person, and excellent preacher."

In the churchyard there is a beautiful marble urn, to the memory of Wm. Glanville, Esq. This monument has much interest locally, as it is the scene year by year of a curious ceremony. Mr. Glanville left estates to the amount of £30 yearly for the purpose of paying 5 poor boys of the parish of Wotton under 16 years of age, £2 each, on condition that they should attend on the anniversary of his death, and with their hands laid upon his gravestone repeat aloud by heart The Lord's Prayer, The Apostles' Creed, and The Ten Commandments; and also read the 15th chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, and write two verses



THE GLANVILLE MONUMENT, WOTTON.

*(From a photograph by Rose, Dorking.)*

from it. This ceremony takes place each year on the 2nd of February, which is called Forty Shilling Day. The railing has been left purposely defective on one side to enable the boys to enter and stand round the monument, which they do.

This Mr. Glanville was the nephew of John Evelyn. He appears to have been somewhat eccentric, as he gave orders to be buried eighteen feet deep. His father had the odd wish to be wrapped in lead, and taken out to sea and dropped overboard on the Goodwin Sands, which after his death was carried out. Evelyn says: "This occasioned much discourse, he having no relation at all to the sea."

Wotton Church is altogether very interesting, and the neighbourhood is very beautiful, and will well repay a visit. Much more might be said about it.