

## THE CHURCH OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, SMITHFIELD.

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College.

The history of this church is briefly as follows.\* It was built for the Black Canons regular of St. Augustine, by Prior Rahere, during the year of Henry I. in the beginning of the 12th century. no building having existed there before his time. A Saxon church is, indeed, hinted at as having once occupied the same site; but there seems to be no great authority for the statement. The exact date is variously given; but there can be no doubt that the greater part of the existing remains are of Rahere's time, and finished c. 1123, being about coeval with the naves of Durham, Peterborough, and Norwich cathedrals.

The present church was the choir only of Rahere's structure, the nave having been built at the beginning of the 13th century, in a later style of architecture. An apse no doubt formed part of the original church, as is very clearly shown by the two Norman columns and arches; and it is further indicated by the beginning of the curve, which shows itself in the old work up to and including the Norman string over the aisle arches at the western side of the end wall, and also (in rather an unusual manner) in the curve of the base of the apse column before referred to. This apse is said by some writers to have been pentagonal on plan; but it is clear that it was circular, and it had no doubt an aisle continued round it at the back, and the triforium completed round it above.

The original church had apse, transepts, choir and nave, cloisters, prior's house, refectory, chapter-house, and other usual

\* A good account of the Augustine Canons, &c. will be found in the History of the church as given in a lecture by Mr. J. H. Parker, and printed for the Restoration Committee.

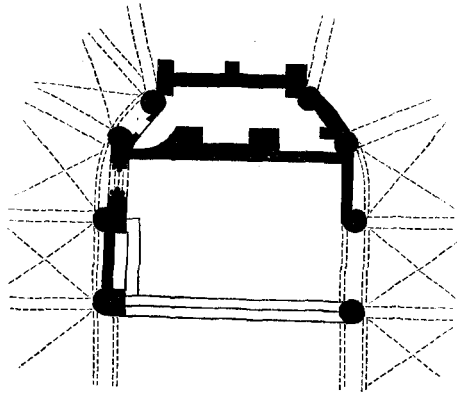
adjuncts to a conventual church, forming, when complete, a very splendid monument of the piety and architectural skill of our forefathers.

The triforium openings towards the choir are more elaborate than is often found, each opening having three detached columns and four small arches under an enriched round arch. These openings are in very good general condition, but the triforia themselves are by no means so. The northern is, indeed, complete in its outline; but the original outer wall seems to have been destroyed and rebuilt in recent times, probably the 17th century. It is used as a school-room, having a master's house at the east end. The southern triforium is altogether destroyed; and, if this be not rebuilt within three or four years, it may be very difficult to do so afterwards, as the houses (Pope's Cottages) close adjoining to it have been built, as we are informed, about fifteen years, and will soon acquire a prescriptive right of light and air.

Both of the transepts are destroyed, the south beyond the line of the aisle outer walls, and the north beyond the line of the aisle arches. The mouldings to the great arch of the southern one are perfect, and so is the triforium arch over the choir aisle: a good drawing of the transept itself, almost perfect except the roof, is given in Wilkinson, under date 1819. The ground on which the transept stood is unoccupied (except as a graveyard).

The apse was cut off, and a wall built where the present east wall now is, apparently in the 15th century; it seems to have been intended to form a fine eastern end by the insertion of a reredos and windows of a Perpendicular or Third Pointed character. Part of the joints and arch-mouldings of the windows still remain on the north and south sides of the wall, westward. Whether this was carried out or not, and when this Perpendicular work was destroyed, if ever completed, does not clearly appear.

It most probably was carried out, as work of the same date may be traced in almost every part of the church, showing that it had then sustained great alteration. I may instance the



GROUND PLAN OF APSE PRIOR TO THE PRESENT RESTORATIONS.

doorway near Rahere's tomb (c. 1406) and the tomb canopy, the straight piece of wall over the curved Norman string of aisle arches at the east end of the external openings in the north aisle, the change from Norman to Perpendicular of the corbels under the arch mouldings of the great western round arch of the cross; a similar change in the capitals to the columns of the great arch of the north transept, and the rebuilding of the whole clerestory east of the cross. For it has been found that a string-course, which runs all along the gallery formed in the thickness of the clerestory walls, is made up, almost entirely of fragments of Norman arch mouldings. The masonry is also different from that of the triforium under, and the mouldings to the jambs are of late date.

*Large repairs seem to have been done by Prior Bolton 1506-32, more particularly the beautiful projecting work in the south triforium. Attention may be called to the fact of the north and south arches of the cross being pointed, whereas the east and west are round. The reason popularly given for this difference is, a wish that all the arches should range in height, which they would not have done with the round arches, as the choir arches are much larger in span than those of the transepts. It is, however, remarkable that the pointed arches are much stilted (as*

round ones might have been, and as they actually are in the apse), and that the tops of the arches do *not* range. I apprehend that the opinion given several years since by Mr. Hussey is the correct one, viz. that these arches have been reset. In an examination we find that part of these have been made good with freestone, which is used everywhere for the late work, whilst Caen stone only was used for the earlier arches. Fire stone has also been largely used in the clerestory.

It is stated that Queen Mary gave the building to a convent of Black Friars, who began to rebuild the nave, but were dispossessed by Queen Elizabeth. No trace of their work is, however, apparent. Great alterations and repairs seem to have been effected from 1622 to 1628, at which last date the "steeple," part of stone and part of timber, "was pulled down to the foundation and rebuilt of brick." The brick wall at the upper part of the east end seems to have been built in the 17th century (probably 1622-33), when "more money" is described to have been expended.

The west walls and the tower are modern erections of the 17th century. Of the nave very little remains; but, judging from the beautiful doorway, still existing, of the south aisle, it must have been a very splendid erection. It was joined on to the Norman work in a very singular manner, as is shown in the detached shaft in the present south aisle west of the transept. The nave was pulled down unhappily in Henry the VIII.'s time, and few remains of it exist; there is, however, the present very beautiful entrance from Smithfield, which is said to have once formed the end to the south aisle of the nave. This, however, would have made the nave disproportionably long; and I should think Mr. Parker's suggestion more likely, viz. that it was the entrance gateway to the Close. The south wall existed for nearly its whole length up to A. D. 1856, and must have shown, no doubt, clear traces of the general arrangements of the piers, &c. That wall was then pulled down, and no remains appear above the ground level; but, on digging down in order to lower the entrance path several of the bases of the piers were found to remain *in situ*.

The site of the chapter-house is now built over by Pope's Cottages, but of the other attached buildings there exist more remains than might be supposed by a casual observer.

The site of the east cloister is now occupied by various buildings. Very fine remains of it existed up to 1833, when they were allowed to fall, owing to neglect and decay.

Of the refectory and crypt, portions shew very clearly in passing through Middlesex Passage, and the crypt exists in a tolerably perfect state throughout the whole extent, or nearly so, of the refectory.

The state of the church when it came into the hands of the Restoration Committee, and when Mr. Slater and I had to advise them upon it, was briefly this:—

The nave and transepts entirely destroyed, two columns only remaining of the apse. The north triforium used as a school-room. The south triforium destroyed altogether, and the eastern portion of it used as a ware-room in connection with a fringe factory adjoining. This factory occupied also the whole site of the dormitory and Lady Chapel (supposing that there had been one), and projected over the whole space of the apse up to the eastern cross wall. The whole surface of the church was, also, filled in with earth to a level of two or three feet above the ancient level. Several of the piers had been cut away in a very unsafe manner in order to accommodate some of the pewing, and the wall of the north aisle was several inches out of the perpendicular and only kept in position by strong brick buttresses.

The first work undertaken was to clear out the ground to the old level of the paving; and in doing this various remains were found which shewed that the filling-in had taken place at a late date, and that the level of the Perpendicular doorway near Rahere's tomb, which was level with the new paving, did not shew that the general level of the church had been raised when that was formed, but that the eastern end only had been raised at that time, the altar being then approached no doubt by several steps. The old level was much varied, as is shown by several jumps in the line of the plinths at various parts. There can be

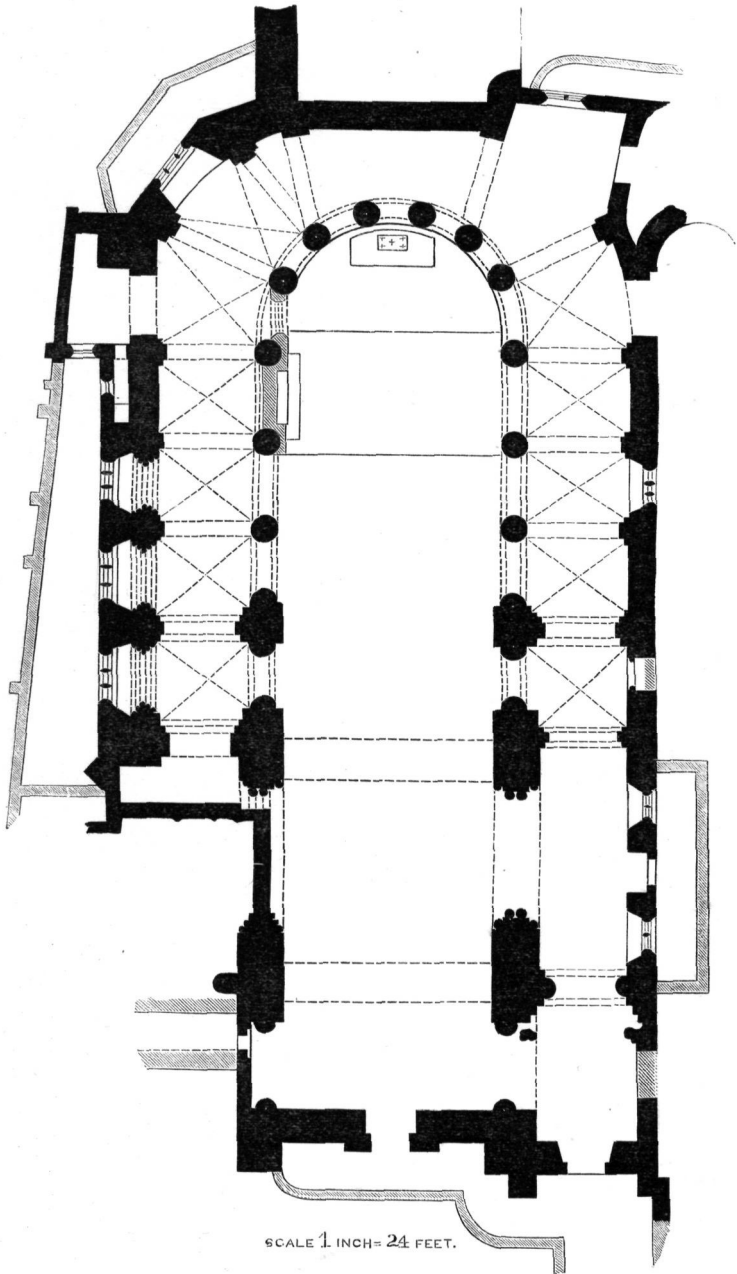
little question however that these jumps indicate more especially the range of the old stall work in choir seats. When the excavation was effected and the foundation of the church examined, we found clear reasons to account for the various settlements which shewed themselves in the stone-work above; brick vaults had been dug out close to the piers and much below the foundations; in one case directly under them.

We found also that the old foundations had been put in on a layer of peat, although there was a bed of gravel only a foot or so under it. With all these defects and subsequent maltreatment, the only wonder is that the old church ever stood at all.

We need scarcely say that the walls and piers were underpinned, the vaults filled up solidly with concrete, and the whole surface covered also with a thick layer of it.

The stone-work, where cut away was also made good, but no more done to it than was absolutely necessary. The wall of the north aisle required especial care. It was very much out of an upright, and the stone-work so very much decayed, that it would have been almost impossible to have raised it had the wall been taken down and rebuilt in the usual way. We therefore suggested to the Committee that the wall should be moved up bodily, and it was so done accordingly. The old stone-work was by that means quite preserved and restored to its old position without damage of any kind. We also found that the openings in this aisle were not those of windows, but of openings into another aisle, or a range of chapels.

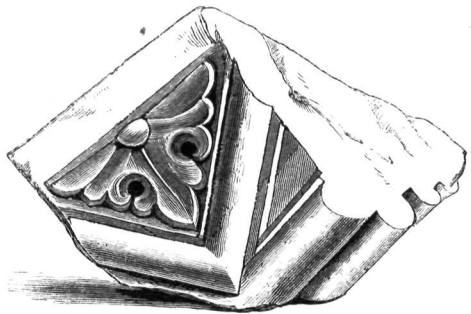
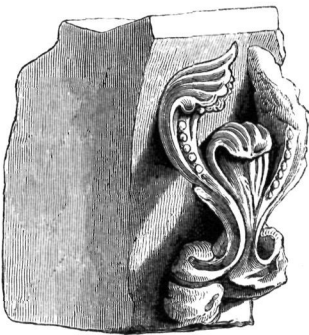
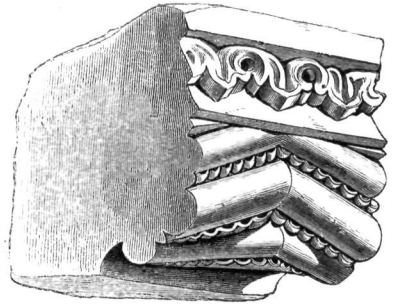
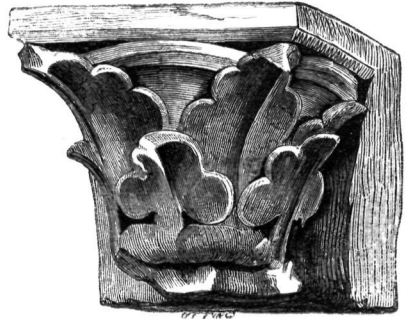
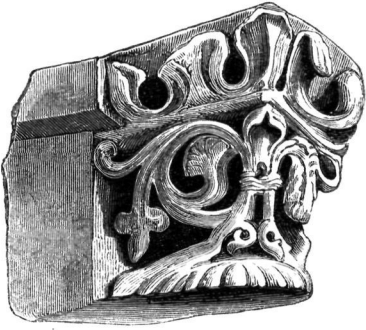
The restoration therefore has been carried out so as to preserve the old arrangement of that part and shew the arches and jambs complete of the openings. The arrangement of the apse was a work of much greater difficulty. The Committee used every effort to obtain possession of the wareroom over it, but without effect, and after long consideration decided, quite in accordance with our views and with those of the Committee of the Incorporated Society, to show the old arrangement on the ground level at least, if not above. The eastern wall was therefore taken out and supported on an iron girder and the stone work of the apse com-



SCALE 1 INCH = 24 FEET.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, SMITHFIELD.

GROUND PLAN AS RESTORED.



FRAGMENTS FOUND IN PULLING DOWN THE WALLS AT THE EAST END, ETC.



pleted under it up to the level of the triforium floor or nearly so, with the earnest hope that future efforts for the completion of the work may be more successful. The pulling down of this wall and of another under the tower (erected probably to form the back of the stall-work there) afforded us some very interesting and valuable specimens of the capitals and other enrichments of the old Norman church, and for other fillings-in of more recent times we obtained specimens of screenwork (apparently) of later date, with much of the old colouring and gilding upon them.

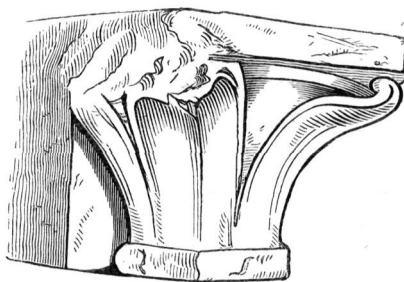
Much of this work is of a very fine class, and some of a somewhat unusual character.

The church is now ready for the paving, seats, &c. The next thing in importance probably to the above would be, the removal of the whole of the earth now filled in to the two churchyards, so as to lay bare the ground to the original level of the church. If, as we think very probable, the excavations should reveal the existence of much of the lower part of the otherwise destroyed nave, they would give the same interesting results lately obtained by similar means at Fountains Abbey, and the interest attaching to the discovery would give, no doubt, a great stimulus on behalf of the public to the efforts for restoring the church. It may be found that the destruction has been complete even to the foundations, but we apprehend not; and, in any case, a few trials would soon establish the fact, one way or the other. The work would be done gradually, so that the remains of coffins, &c., could be most carefully re-interred at the lower level.

The Committee have however well nigh exhausted their funds already, and such a work is quite beyond their present power, as they will find great difficulty in providing, without great extra assistance, even for such necessary works as the paving, warming, and seating. The rector Mr. Abbis, the chairman Mr. Tite, M.P., Mr. Foster White and Mr. Boord, the churchwardens, and others have been very liberal donors, and the chairman and rector in particular have given a great amount of time and labour in

order to have the whole completed in a manner befitting so interesting a church in this great city.

Finally we ought to state that the works have been carried out in a very able way by the contractors Messrs. Dove, the clerk of works Mr. Cooper, and the builder's foreman Mr. Hine.



CAPITAL FOUND IN PULLING DOWN E. WALL.