Timber-Framed Porches to Bedfordshire Churches

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SUMMARY

Bedfordshire possesses four timber-framed church porches of medieval and post-medieval date. The uses to which they were put varied according to their pre- or post-Reformation date, but in construction they follow their normal tradition of Bedfordshire timber-framing as this is known from other studies.

This paper is dedicated, with affection, to the memory of Stuart Eborall Rigold (1919-1980), who encouraged and helped its author.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Timber-framed porches to churches occur with varying frequency in the counties of England.[1] Although Bedfordshire's contribution is meagre, they are worth study and record. What Cecil Hewett has written of the Essex examples may be applied, *mutatis mutandis,* to the Bedfordshire examples: they 'are complete buildings like one-roomed houses, with walls, fenestration, verge-boards and roof-frames all conforming to the general trends' within the county.[2] There are two principal types of timber-framed porches:[3] the open type, in which the side walls are pierced by a series of unglazed windows or openings, with or without arch-heads carved from boards; and the closed type, in which the side walls are solid, pierced at most by one or two small (often glazed) windows and sometimes by none at all. It has been plausibly suggested by Stuart Rigold[4] that the open-type were designed as marriage porches to provide shelter for clergy and bride and groom – most notably, perhaps, for the lord of the manor's daughter when she married. The open sides would ensure that the ceremony remained at least partly visible to those outside the porch. The medieval marriage ceremony took place partly at the church door.[5] The *Missale Sarum* has the rubric: *In primis statuantor vir et mulier ante ostium ecclesiae coram Deo, sacerdote, et populo, vir a dextris mulieribus, et mulier a sinistris viri.*[6] John Myrc's *Instructions for Parish Priests* directs:

Then lete hem [*sc.* the bride and groom] come and wytnes brynge
To stonde by at here weddynge;
So openlyche at the chyrche dore
Let hem eyther wedde othere.[7]

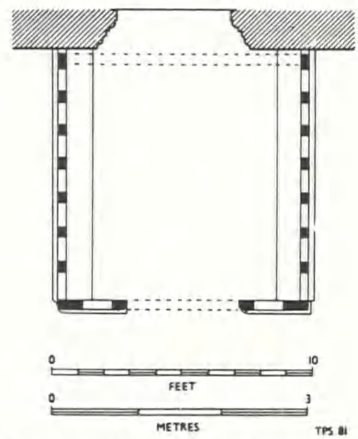

Fig 1 Flitwick, church of St Peter and St Paul: South Porch: Plan

And we are told of Chaucer's Wife of Bath that:

She was a worthy womman al hir lyve,
Housebondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve. . . .[8]

A French illustration of the late fourteenth century or early fifteenth century shows the bride and groom with the priest outside the church door and apparently (though not certainly) outside a porch.[9] Presumably the service took place *within* the porch only during inclement weather (*cf. ante ostium* in the *Missale Sarum*). A woodcut from *The arte or crafte to lyve well* shows a marriage ceremony taking place with, apparently, a building in the background.[10] According to a reference traced by Maskell the doorway of the church was used for other business connected with a marriage: 'Dower seems to have been made over to the bride, or settlement of it completed, at the door of the church before the marriage service began.'[11]

The closed or blind-sided porches, of course, could not serve a similar purpose. Rigold suggested[12] that most, if not all, the blind-sided timber-framed porches are of post-Reformation date; and certainly one would not want to suggest an earlier date for the closed porches in Bedfordshire or in neighbouring Cambridgeshire or Hertfordshire.[13] After the Reformation that part of the marriage service which had taken place at the church door

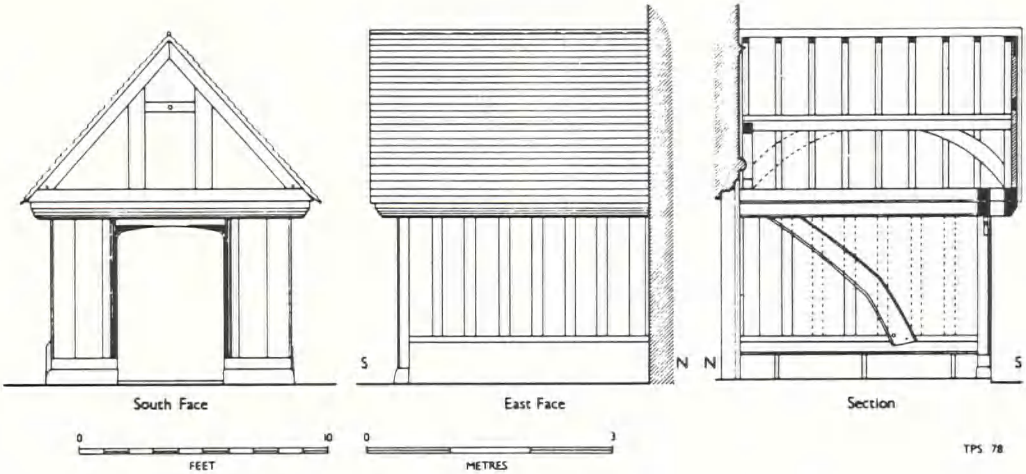

Fig 2 Flitwick, church of St Peter and St Paul; South Porch Elevations and Section

was discontinued, and the First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549) pointedly directs that 'At the daye appointed for Solemnizacion of Matrimonie, the persones to be maried shal come into the bodie of ye churche, with theyr frendes and neighbours. And there the priest shal thus saye . . .' etc.[14]

PART TWO: DISCUSSION

Of the Bedfordshire porches one (Salford) is certainly of the open type, one (Flitwick) is certainly of the closed type, whilst the other two are probably of the closed type also. It is interesting in connexion with what is said in Part One that the Salford open-type porch is the oldest and the only one to have a crown-post roof. The changeover from crown-post roofs to side-purlin roofs in timber-framed buildings seems to have occurred, in this area, in the period either side of 1500, and a number of buildings are now recorded which show both types in different parts of the building;[15] all these are dated to the very end of the Middle Ages. The porch of definite closed type at Flitwick has a roof of side-purlin construction; this has the purlins set in-pitch and notched into the collar of the inner truss. This is the usual type of post-medieval roof construction within the county.[16] Tilsworth, which is almost certainly of the closed type, also had a side-purlin roof of this sort, whilst Ravensden, again probably of closed type, has a somewhat characterless roof of collared rafter-couples without purlins.

Salford, as already indicated, is the oldest of the Bedfordshire porches, although the thirteenth-century date suggested by Howard and Crossley applies only to the unstructural tie-beam which is clearly reset in the present building. The equilateral arch of the front face would be at home in a fourteenth-century context, as would the sturdy construction, though neither of these is decisive. On the other hand, the scantling of the crown-post braces, though they are not square in section, is large – especially that of the arch-braces to the collar-purlin. This may be taken to indicate a fairly early date;[17] on balance, a date in the fourteenth century seems most likely. Down-bracing to the tie-beam, as found at Salford, is well established as a characteristic at least in the northern half of the county, and may be due to dissemination along the Ouse Valley.[18]

Of some interest is the re-use of a thirteenth-century tie-beam in the present building; it is placed immediately in front of the inner-truss tie-beam and itself serves no structural purpose. Its date is beyond doubt since its lower arris is decorated with thirteenth-century dog-tooth ornament. Rigold has suggested that the beam was kept and re-used from an earlier building – probably a porch on the same site – because of some special significance that it had for the people of Salford.[19] This would seem to be borne out by the presence on the beam of some simple carvings or graffiti: a pentangle, perhaps a heart, and what appears to be a rosette. The pentangle was a well-known medieval Christian symbol, its five points or pentads being associated with the five wounds of Christ and the five joys of

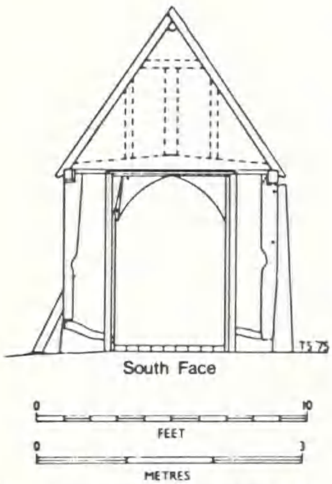

Fig 3 Ravensden: church of All Saints: South Porch South Face

Mary. As such it is important in the meaning of the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:*

> Then thay schewed hym the schelde, that was of schyr
> goulez
> With the pentangel depaynt of pure gold hwez.[20]

The presence of the pentangle in a *porch,* however, may look back to earlier, pre-Christian uses of the symbol, in particular as an apotropaic talisman intended to ward off evil, or the Devil in particular. As such it is preserved in the folk-song *Green Grow the Rushes O:* 'Five for the symbol at your door'.[21] This is not to say that some kind of pagan religion co-existed with Christianity, as some have supposed, but rather that, at a popular level, talismanic elements were taken up within Christianity itself. Hence the fifteenth-century *Medicina pro Morbo Caduco et le Fevr,* a conjuration against the hex which uses, *inter alia,* the Five Wounds of Christ, may have been unofficial so far as the Church was concerned, but it was no more pagan than was the use of bell, book, and candle:

> In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen.
> What manere of Ivell thou be
> In Goddis name I coungere the.
> . . . .
> I coungere the with woundes fyve
> That Iesus suffred be his lyve . . . (etc).[22]

The other symbols are less definite. If there really is a heart (rather than a conventional 'heraldic' symbol) then this would connect with medieval iconography of the heart of Mary.[23] Similarly, if the third design really is a rosette then this would reflect the contemporary veneration of the Virgin Mary and her comparison to the rose.[24] The religious symbolism of the Salford emblems, which must be more than casual graffiti, would provide sufficient reason for keeping the beam and incorporating it in the present porch. If, as seems likely, it comes from an earlier porch on the same site then the symbolism would act as a reminder that the service was to take place *coram Deo.*

The side walls of the Salford porch have each five unglazed openings, the heads formed by the wall-plates without any arch-heads cut from boards which are a feature of some porches in Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and elsewhere.[25] The side walls at Tilsworth are rendered and therefore unexaminable. Those of Flitwick are close-studded, a technique which, in Bedfordshire, is normally reserved for buildings of some quality, and then sometimes only on the principal face.[26] Presumably this is an indication that the Flitwick porch was regarded as of some importance within the community. At Ravensden the studs, now represented only by their peg-holes, were also closely set, being at about 18-inch intervals centre-to-centre. The use of close-studding in these buildings may probably be taken, in this area, to indicate a relatively late date, probably in the sixteenth century. This would be consistent with their being placed, because of their closed-sided construction, in the post-Reformation period.

The treatment of the front face also differs from porch to porch. None of the Bedfordshire examples *now* has openings on either side of the central archway, as in some other examples,[27] although their original presence cannot be firmly ruled out; and it is possible that the peg-holes in the now mutilated tie-beam at Tilsworth are connected with arch-head boards in its front face. In all cases the central opening is framed by door-posts which run the full height from ground-level to tie-beam, even where, as at Salford, other uprights are placed on half-height walls. Arch-heads to the central openings are formed by separate boards tenoned into the posts and tie-beams; at Tilsworth this has been altered, and the tie-beam cut through, but peg-holes indicate clearly enough that the original arrangement was the same as in the other porches. At Salford the arch is equilateral whilst at Ravensden it is only slightly less pointed. At Flitwick there is a very shallow three-centred arch, whilst the peg-holes at Tilsworth indicate that this too must have had a fairly shallow arch – of four- or three-centred form. At Salford the panels above the tie-beam are left open, the dominant features being the central crown-post and its wide down-braces. In other cases the panels are infilled, although one cannot be certain that this is always a primary feature. At Tilsworth two queen-posts rise to a collar, above which is a single central strut; at Flitwick two studs rise from the tie-beam to the rafters with an horizontal timber running between them; at Ravensden (which is rendered and so has to be inspected from inside) there is a central and two side struts, the former rising to a collar.

In all cases where there is an inner truss (Tilsworth has none) there are arch-braces from the posts to the tie-beam. At Tilsworth the horizontals are embedded in the church wall rather than being supported by an inner truss. None of the Bedfordshire examples has an intermediate truss.

Jointing calls for no special comment. The timbers are too short to require scarfing whilst other joints are of common-place design: mortise-and-tenon joints where appropriate, with lapped joints for fixing collars to rafters. Rafter-heads are halved together. Where visible, the usual lap-dovetails are used for fixing the tie-beam to the wall-plates.

In order to accommodate the necessary mortises at their juncture with corner-posts and tie-beams the wall-plates in all cases project beyond the front face for a short distance. But the treatment of these projecting ends differs; at Salford the one original is chamfered on both lower arrises but is not pared; both plates have fairly substantial brackets rising to them from the corner-posts. In the other porches no such brackets are used. The ends of the plates are pared at Tilsworth, though the one original plate at Ravensden is not pared. At Flitwick the pairs of wall-plates are returned along the front face, so that no wall-plate ends as such are present.

Although some of the Salford timbers are plain-chamfered, Flitwick is the only one of the porches to exhibit mouldings. These include a three-quarter roll-moulding running up the outer angles of the corner-posts, a half-roll and stepped mouldings running up the door-posts, and a more complex moulding including half-rolls, hollow chamfers, and ogees, on the front-face fascia beam. In addition the porch has carved spandrels to the arch-head, the only instance of this amongst the Bedfordshire porches.

Only Salford shows rafter-holes at the feet of the rafters, just above wall-plate level. The purpose of these has been disputed;[28] but John McCann has convincingly argued that they were 'part of a gauging system by which a perfectly aligned roof could be built on a pair of imperfectly aligned wall-plates'.[29] He posits a method, using a special gauge, for achieving this end.

PART THREE: SCHEDULE

FLITWICK
St Peter and St Paul
South Porch
TL 029342
Figs 1 and 2

There is work of various periods in the church, which was drastically restored in 1858 and again (by Butterfield) in 1867. The south porch is set in front of a thirteenth-century doorway and is a fairly large structure of the closed type. It is set on dwarf walls of brick and local ironstone with timber sills. The front (S) face has large corner-posts, unjowelled, with three-quarter roll-mouldings at their outer arrises. The door-posts are moulded on their inner faces. Between them, at their heads, runs a plank carved to a very shallow three-centred arch with rosettes carved in the spandrels. There are two straight tie-beams set one above the other; the upper one is recent, and it is uncertain whether it replaces an original upper tie-beam. Above it is a pair of heavy queen-posts with a straight timber (not a collar) running between them at a high level.

The inner truss preserves its wall-posts but has been mutilated by having its tie-beam sawn through, leaving only the stumps in the side walls. The collar above, however, has three mortises in its soffit, indicating the former presence of a central and two queen-posts between tie-beam and collar.

The side walls are close-studded and have two wall-plates, one above the other; the upper plates are relatively recent timbers, but may replace originals in the same positions: the cut-through tie-beam of the inner truss would seem to indicate this. The east wall has, internally, a large carved brace fixed *onto* (not into) the wall: it is clearly not primary. Similarly, the functionally straight brace on the west wall is an added feature. A deep and heavily moulded fascia beam runs along both side walls and is returned along the front face. There are no windows in the side walls.

The roof is of side-purlin construction with the purlins set in-pitch. At the inner truss they are clasped between collar and rafters and set into notches in the upper face of the collar. Otherwise, the rafter-couples, which are half-lapped at the apex, are without collars. A curved wind-brace survives in each slope at the outer (S) end, rising from rafter roof to purlin. Mortises in the rafters and purlins at the inner (N) end indicate the former presence of similar wind-braces at this end too. There are no barge-boards masking the verges.

The presence of a side-purlin roof and the closed nature of the porch indicate a fairly late date – that is, in the post-Reformation period. On the other hand, the use of close-studding and of well-curved wind-braces would seem to indicate a date not *too* long after the Reformation. A date in the later sixteenth century seems most likely.

RAVENSDEN
All Saints
South Porch
TL 078543
Fig 3

The complex history of this church has been revealed by archaeological excavation.[30] There is a crown-post roof. The porch stands against a doorway with a Norman tympanum set in a seventeenth-century brick wall. The porch itself is described laconically by Pevsner as 'of brick, probably late c17',[31] yet even a cursory glance shows timber door-posts and corner-posts as well as a tie-beam, and it is clear that the seventeenth-century brickwork is no more than a renewal of an earlier porch of timber-framing.

The front (S) face has corner-posts, the western one renewed but perhaps quite early – possibly of the time when the brick walling was built; the eastern post is primary and in poor condition. The wall-plates project slightly and that to the west – a renewed timber – is pared on the bottom and inner faces. Rough sill-beams at the foot may have been displaced during later repair work. The east door-post is renewed but that to the west is primary; it has a slight jowl at the top, into which is fixed, using a bare-faced tenon, the knee-piece which forms half the arch-head. There is a similar knee-piece (renewed) to the east door-post, and together they form a segmental-pointed arch-head. They are tenoned also into the tie-beam, only the lower portion of which is visible externally: the upper half is concealed by cement rendering, but is visible internally. Its upper face is slightly cambered. It carries one central and two queen-posts which rise to the high-set collar.

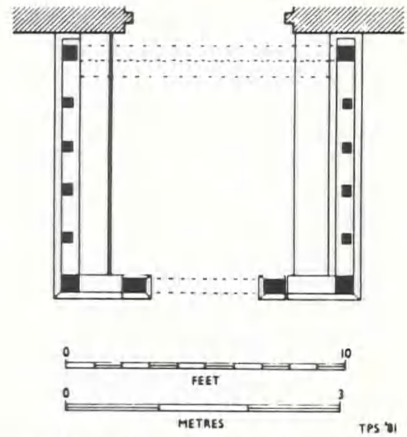

Fig 4 Salford: church of St Mary: North Porch Plan

The inner truss has a probably original uncambered tie-beam. The wall-posts (embedded in later walling) are also original, as is the western arch-brace, which is tenoned into both post and tie-beam. The eastern arch-brace is a replacement, using the original wall-post mortise but not the original tie-beam mortise, which has been blocked.

The original east wall-plate has peg-holes at 1 ft 6½ in intervals, doubtless for the studs of the original wall, which was thus fairly close-studded. Presumably the west wall was similar.

The roof has been much renewed, only two rafters appearing to be primary: they are fairly wany timbers. A couple of collars may also be primary. The construction is of simple coupled rafters without side-purlins. A recent ridge-pole has been inserted, as have straight diagonally-set 'wind-braces'. The feet of the rafters have sprockets which may be original features re-used.

It is difficult to date this small and virtually featureless porch. A post-medieval date, but before the late seventeenth-century, seems likely, and the porch (*cf* Tilsworth) was probably a small example of the closed type.

SALFORD
St Mary
North Porch
SP 935391
Figs 4 and 5

The church is mostly of *c.*1300 though with some fairly drastic alterations carried out in 1867. Its timber-framed north porch is the largest, most

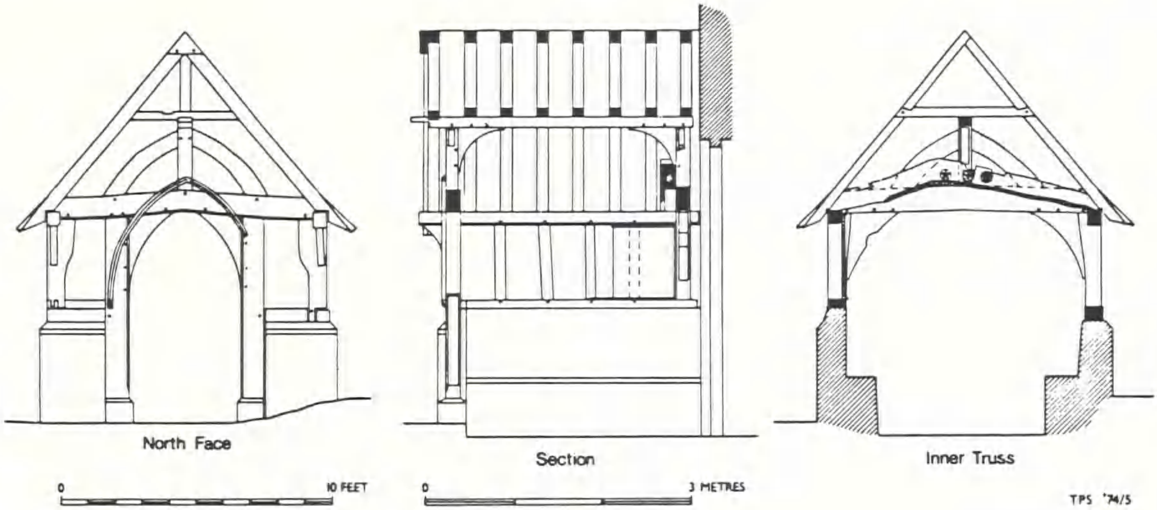

Fig 5 Salford: church of St Mary: North Porch North Face and Sections

impressive, and most interesting of the Bedfordshire examples. It is also the only instance within the county of the open type which, it is suggested in Part One, were used as 'marriage porches'. It is a one-bay structure on a low stone-built wall with integral benches. The front (N) face has fairly heavy door-posts with plain chamfers, the eastern post having a stepped run-out stop to its outer chamfer. The posts rise from dwarf walls lower than the main stone walls supporting the porch. Small timber spandrels tenoned and pegged into the posts and tie-beam form an equilateral arch, although they do not meet to form a point at the centre under the tie-beam. Following the line of the arch, and about 8 in beyond it, is an applied strip with shield-shaped stops, itself forming an equilateral arch. The corner-posts, which are jointed into the sills, have heavy jowls to take the wall-plates, which project about 10 in beyond the face with slightly curved brackets beneath. The tie-beam is only slightly cambered and has a plain chamfer along its lower arris. Centrally above the tie-beam is a short square crown-post supporting one end of the collar-purlin, which, like the wall-plates, projects well in advance of the wall-face. The crown-post is supported by a pair of well-curved tension-braces rising from the tie-beam. The collar here is slighter than others in the porch and is probably a replacement. Above it is a vertical strut rising to the apex. A solid arch-brace or bracket rises from the crown-post to the collar-purlin within the porch.

The inner truss is some 8 ft from the front truss and is set 4½ in in front of the church wall. The posts are less heavily jowled than those of the front face, although once again the wall-plates project well (4 in) beyond them. Solid arch-braces, not forming an arch, rise to the straight tie-beam, which cuts across the top of the church doorway. A short square crown-post, again down-braced to the tie-beam, supports the collar-purlin, which in its turn supports the collar; the latter is lap-jointed with half-dovetails to the rafters. As at the other end, a solid arch-brace or bracket rises from the crown-post to the collar-purlin.

Set immediately in advance of this truss in the earlier tie-beam, carved with various designs whose significance is discussed in Part Two of this paper. It is fairly sharply cambered, although the original mid-point is set off-centre in the present arrangement. Altogether it is an awkward feature, and the reason for its inclusion is discussed above. It may be reliably dated to the thirteenth-century on the basis of the dog-tooth ornament carved on its lower outer arris.

The side walls are of short studs — four to each side — with no provision for infill panels. There can be no doubt that the spaces between the studs were intended to be open. The studs are pegged at top and bottom. The wall-plate on the east side is plain-chamfered along each lower arris. The west wall-plate is unchamfered, but is probably a replacement.

The roof, as previously noted, is of crown-post construction. There are eight pairs of rafters spaced at about 1 ft 4 in centre-to-centre. The collars are lap-

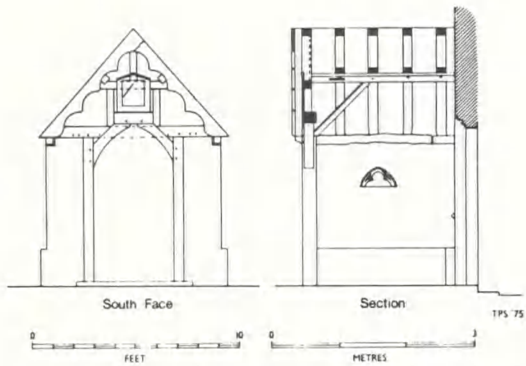

Fig 6 Tilsworth: church of All Saints: South Porch South Face and Section

jointed with half-dovetails to the rafters, which are halved together at the apex. The feet of the rafters carry sprockets and also have rafter-holes just above the wall-plate level.

The porch is sturdily constructed. It must date from later than the re-used thirteenth-century tie-beam, and the shape of the front arch suggests a fourteenth-century date. There is nothing, however, on which firm dating may be based: the presence of a crown-post roof in this region could indicate any time up to *c*1500, although the large scantling of some of the roof members perhaps suggests an earlier date.

TILSWORTH
All Saints
South Porch
SP 975243
Fig 6

Much of the church is of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century date, with good crown-post roofs over both nave and chancel. The south porch is small and now has solid walls partly of recent brickwork and partly cement-rendered. The thin side walls and the projection of the wall-plates (which is not necessary if the plates are set over masonry walls) suggest an original timber-framed porch; it is possible that some timbers remain beneath the rendering. The front (S) face has door-posts rising from ground-level but these are renewed timbers. The peculiar arch-head is also recent and rises above the level of the straight tie-beam which has clearly been sawn through. Mortises in the tie-beam soffit, together with associated peg-holes, were clearly intended to take an original wooden arch-head (lower than the present one), proving that the door-posts too replace earlier timbers. Peg-holes towards each end of the mutilated tie-beam presumably received the upper ends of timbers: either window-head boards of the sort familiar from other timber-framed porches or else braces of some kind. Above the tie-beam is a pair of short queen-posts rising to a collar with a king-stud above rising to the apex. The wall-plates' ends project about 4 in beyond the wall-face and are pared on the lower and inner faces. They support scallop barge-boards masking the verges.[32] A comparatively recent sun-dial board obscures some of the upper front face.

There is no inner truss, the wall-plates and purlins having their ends embedded in the fabric of the church. Nothing is known of the side walls. The west wall contains a reset trefoiled arch of stone, perhaps from a piscina, stoup, or other niche.

The roof is of side-purlin construction with the purlins set in-pitch. In the front face the purlins are clasped between the collar and the rafters and set in a notch in the upper face of the collar. The other collars, four in all, are placed *above* the purlins. Both purlins have mortises which make no sense in their present positions and these timbers must therefore be re-used. The rafters are widely spaced – about 1 ft 7 in centre-to-centre – and are halved together at the apex. On the west side is a straight functional wind-brace rising from wall-plate to purlin; this is not a primary feature.

There is no firm dating evidence, except that a side-purlin roof is not to be expected in this area, and in a building of this humble type, before *c*1500. The porch is a feeble affair compared with Salford, or Little Hadham, Herts, or even the smaller Hertfordshire porches at Stanstead Abbots and Hunsdon. A post-medieval date is likely and it is probably an example of a post-Reformation closed-type porch (*cf* Ravensden).

NOTES

1 The late Stuart Rigold had been collecting data for many years on the subject. I am grateful for his encouragement to investigate the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire examples. He provided me with several examples and was the source of ideas, both in correspondence and in informal discussion. It was therefore particularly sad to have to change the tenses of this note between manuscript and typescript, and the dedication of the paper is an inadequate attempt to express my gratitude. He was not, of course, responsible for any errors or infelicities in the present paper.

There is little in print on the subject: it was dealt with briefly in F.E. Howard and F.H. Crossley, *English Church Woodwork: a Study in Craftsmanship during the Mediaeval Period, AD 1250-1550,* 2nd ed, 1927, 60 *sqq,* and again in F.H. Crossley, *Timber Building in England from Early Times to the End of the Seventeenth-Century,* 1951, 68 *sqq,* but neither of these is adequate. (See also subsequent notes for further references.)

2 C.A. Hewett, *Church Carpentry: a Study Based on Essex Examples,* 1974, 69. Compared with the Essex porches – or some of those in Suffolk or Kent – the Bedfordshire examples are, as SER might have put it, 'no great shakes'.

3 This ignores those which are partly of stone and partly of timber, for example the stone-walled porch with full crucks at Conwy, Caernarfon (personal observation).

4 S.E. Rigold, in a paper read before the Royal Archaeological Institute, 1968, and in correspondence and discussion. *Cf* K.W.E. Gravett, *Timber and Brick Building in Kent,* 1971, 10, and T.P. Smith, 'Bedfordshire Timber-Framed Buildings – II', *Beds Magazine,* 133, 1980, 202.

5 *Cf* D. Rock, *The Church of Our Fathers as Seen in St Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury . . .,* new ed, in four vols, ed G.H. Hart and W.H. Frere, vol 4, 1904, 200.

6 Available in W. Maskell, *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiae Anglicanae: the occasional Offices of the Church of* [sic] *England according to the old use of Salisbury, the Prymer in English, and other prayers and forms . . .,* vol 1, 2nd ed, 1882, 50: *Ordo et faciendum Sponsalia.*

7 E. Peacock, ed, *Instructions for Parish Priests, by John Myrc,* EETS, OS 31, revised ed, 1902, 7, *ll.*204-7.

8 F.N. Robinson, ed, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* 2nd ed, 1957, 21b, *ll.*459-60. For a rare exception, with marriage taking place 'at the door of the chancel of the said church [*viz* Knaresborough] within the said church' in 1472 see Maskell, 1882, 50 and ref. therein.

9 BM Nero Eii, part ii, f217. Reproduced in H.S. Kingsford, *Illustrations of the Occasional Offices of the Church in the Middle Ages from Contemporary Sources,* Alcuin Club Collections, 24, 1921, 35, with accompanying description at 34.

10 f xlvii; reproduced in Kingsford, 1921, 37, with accompanying description at 36.

11 Maskell, 1882, 50n. For other uses of church porches see M.D. Anderson, *History and Imagery in British Churches,* 1971, 71-8.

12 Personal communication and discussion.

13 The timber-framed porches of the latter two counties are the subject of studies, similar to the present one, currently being prepared by the writer.

14 Available in D. Harrison, introd, *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI,* 1968 (replacing ed by E.C.C. Gibson, 1910, with same pagination), 252: 'The Forme of Solemnizacion of Matrimonie', third rubric; the Second Prayer Book (1552) keeps these words, with slight variations of spelling: Harrison, 1968, 410; and they also occur, with some additions and some modifications of spelling, in the present *Book of Common Prayer.*

15 *Cf* J.M. Bailey, *Timber-Framed Buildings: a Study of . . . Bedfordshire and Adjoining Counties,* 1979, 4; T.P. Smith, 'A Demolished Timber-Framed Building at Luton', *Beds Arch J,* 7, 1972, 77 n. 10; T.P. Smith, 'Bedfordshire Timber-Framed Buildings – V', *Beds Magazine,* 136, 1981, 324-5. For examples: N.W. Alcock, 'Timber-Framed Buildings in North Bedfordshire', *Beds Arch J,* 4, 1969, 44-6; D.H. Kennett and T.P. Smith, 'Crowhill Farm, Bolnhurst, Bedfordshire: a Timber-Framed Building and its History', *Beds Arch J,* 12, 1977, 57-84; and J.M. Bailey, 'Two Hall and Crosswing Buildings in East Bedfordshire', *Beds Arch J,* 14, 1980, 77-82.

16 *Cf* Alcock, 1969, 46-7; Bailey, 1979, 3; Bailey, 1980, 86; D.H. Kennett and T.P. Smith, 'A Timber-Framed House in Sundon Road, Harlington, Bedfordshire', *Beds Arch J,* 14, 1980, 102.

17 *Cf* E. Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses,* 1975, 94; and for locally relevant material see G. Bailey and B. Hutton, *Crown Post Roofs in Hertfordshire,* 1966, 6.

18 Alcock, 1969, 43; for local examples: Bailey, 1980, 80; Kennett and Smith, 1977, 67. None of the Hertfordshire porches has down-braces, and the type seems to be uncommon, though not unknown, in that county: Bailey and Hutton, 1966, *passim.*

19 S.E. Rigold, personal communication and discussion.

20 J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, ed, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* 2nd ed, 1967, 18, *ll.*619-20; there is a valuable discussion in J.A. Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* 1966, 41-51. The meaning is explicit in the poem itself:

> And alle his afyaunce vpon folde watz in the fyue woundez
> That Cryst ka3t on the croys, as the crede tellez;
> . . . . .
> That alle his forsnes he feng at the fyue joyez
> That the hende heuen-quene had of hir chylde. . . .
> (*ll.*642-3, 646-7).

The five joys of Mary were a common theme in lyrical poetry: e.g. R.T. Davies, *Medieval English Lyrics: a Critical Anthology,* 1963, 78. The pentangle, as connected with Mary, may also have evoked echoes of her description as 'Star of the Sea', e.g. Davies, 1963, 53:'Of on that is so fair and bricght,/ *Velud maris stella . . .*'; and perhaps also of the five letters of the Latin MARIA. Pritchard gives some discussion of the pentangle, and the related hexagram (most familiar now as the Magen David on the flag of Israel), and she comments that 'both the pentagram and the hexagram are common graffiti', and 'the designs are well established, with a long tradition behind them, and . . . are not irresponsible drawings of no account': V. Pritchard, *English Medieval Graffiti,* 1967, 87-8. *Cf* also H. Child and D. Colles, *Christian Symbolism Ancient and Modern,* 1971, 44-5.

21 *Cf* J. Speirs, *Medieval English Poetry: the Non-Chaucerian Tradition,* 1957, 230 and n 20. Spiers also notes the appearance of the symbol in the Tarot Pack and in the traditional sword-dance, when the swords are knit together pentangle-fashion. So far as his analysis of *Sir Gawain* is concerned, however, he overstresses the importance of the pre-Christian element, and pays insufficient attention (half of one short sentence!) to its Christianised significance, which is put beyond doubt by the text of the poem itself. *Cf* A.C. Spearing, *The Gawain Poet – a Critical Study,* 1970, 175, and indeed the whole of his chapter 5. The Gawain-poet was a sophisticated and courtly writer – his description of Sir Bertilak's castle at *ll.*785-802 reflects the

vision of the ideal castle, depicted by the Limbourg brothers in their manuscript illuminations, and realised in, e.g., Lord Cromwell's towerhouse at Tattershall, Lincs. At a more popular level the magical use of the pentangle continued throughout and beyond the Middle Ages, as is indicated by the fact that such use had to be condemned by various Christian writers even as late as the seventeenth-century: e.g. the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, *Arithmologia,* Rome, 1665: *voces horrendae vna mixtis sacris nominibus, nodo quem Salomonis vocant, adnexo:* quoted in Tolkien and Gordon, 1967, 93, n 623.

22 T. Silverstein, ed, *Medieval English Lyrics,* 1971, 103. Such a poem, with Christian references in every line, is impossible to fit into the extravagant claims of the late Margaret Murray and others for the survival, even down to the fourteenth century, of the 'Old Religion' alongside Christianity: the paganism posited was essentially Devil worship, and it is difficult to understand how a 'conjure' against 'Ivell' could be supportive of the Devil! See M.A. Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe,* 1921, and *The God of the Witches,* 1931; also *The Divine King in England,* 1954. To some extent Miss Murray took her cue from J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* 1835. For critical discussion and full references see K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 1978 ed, 614*sqq,;* for an equally effective refutation: G. Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African,* 1963 ed, *passim,* but especially 105 *sqq.*

23 Child and Colles, 1971, 244. The Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on the other hand, was not instituted until 1648: D. Attwater, *A Dictionary of Mary,* 1957, 107.

24 For the veneration of Mary in the Middle Ages see E. Power, *Medieval Women,* ed M.M. Postan, 1975, 19-20; also J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion,* 1975, 49-50; Anderson, 1971, 129 *sqq.* For the symbolism: Child and Colles, 1971, 243. The theme is familiar in Middle English lyrics and their Latin models and prototypes, e.g. the macaronic 'Levedy, flowr of alle thing,/*Rosa sine spina,*/Thu bere Jesu, Hevene King,/*Gratia divina*': Davies, 1963, 53; the tenderly beautiful, 'There is no rose of swich vertu', as Spiers remarks, reaches through its symbolism to 'moments of what might be called metaphysical vision': 'For in this rose conteined was/Hevene and erthe in litel space,/*Res miranda*': Spiers, 1957, 74; and *cf* his whole discussion, 64-74. The symbolism of the number five (as in the pentangle) and that of the rose are brought together in, e.g., John Lydgate's 'As a Mydsomer Rose', *ll.*113 *sqq:* 'It was the Roose of the bloody feeld,/Roose of Iericho that greuh in Beedlem:/The five Roosys portrayed in the sheeld,/Splayed in the baneer at Ierusalem./The sonne was clips and dirk in euery rem/Whan Christ Ihesu five wellys lyst vncloose/Toward Paradys, callyed the rede strem,/Of whos five woundys prent in your hert a roos.' J. Norton-Smith, ed, *John Lydgate: Poems,* 1966, 24.

25 E.g. Little Hadham, Herts, which is also of interest for its construction: T.P. Smith, 'Unusual Timber-Frame Construction in the Porch of Little Hadham Church, Hertfordshire', *Vernacular Archit,* 7, 1976, 30-33. Cambridgeshire examples include Bassingbourn and Little Eversham: for the latter see Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of . . . West Cambridgeshire,* 1968, 164. *Cf* some of the Essex examples illustrated in Hewett, 1974, 69-78.

26 T.P. Smith, 'Bedfordshire Timber-Framed Buildings – IV', *Beds Magazine,* 135, 1980, 278-9. For the national situation see Mercer, 1975, 118-20, where the connexion between close-studding and relative wealth is well brought out. The closed-type porches in Hertfordshire also have, or had, close-studded sides; they are at Ippollits and Tewin; Impington, Cambs is of similar type.

27 E.g. Hunsdon, Ippollits, Little Hadham, Stanstead Abbots, Herts.

28 R.T. Mason, *Framed Buildings of England,* nd but 1973, 56-7; F.W.B. Charles, 'Scotches, Lever Sockets and Rafter Holes', *Vernacular Archit,* 5, 1974, 21-4; K.W.E. Gravett, 'Rafter Holes', Letter to the Editor, *Vernacular Archit,* 8, 1977, 840.

29 J. McCann, 'The Purpose of Rafter Holes', *Vernacular Archit,* 9, 1978, 26-31; this ref: 28; also J. McCann, 'A Gauge for the Alignment of Medieval Roofs', in S. McGrail, ed, *Woodworking Techniques before AD1500,* BAR International Series 129, 1982, 357-65. Now supported by examples reported in T.P. Smith, 'Three Medieval Timber-Framed Church Porches in Kent: Fawkham, Kemsing and Shoreham', *Arch. Cant.,* 101, 1984, 137-63.

30 D.N. Hall *et al,* 'Excavations inside Ravensden Church, 1969', *Beds Arch J,* 6, 1971, 41-53.

31 N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England: *Bedfordshire and . . . Huntingdon . . .,* 1968, 136.

32 This is perhaps the commonest barge-board design for timber-framed porches throughout the country. Paper submitted May 1984.

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