

RE-OPENING OF A ROMAN BASILICA UNDER
THE CHANCEL OF WING CHURCH.

Probably few persons, even among ecclesiastical architects, are aware that there still exists in the Vale of Aylesbury, beneath the chancel of Wing Church, a crypt which dates from the early Saxon times, and has all the characteristics of a Roman Basilica. This crypt had been closed for many centuries, but was discovered and opened by the late Sir Gilbert Scott, who closed it again. It has now been re-opened at the instance and under the supervision of his son, Mr. George Gilbert Scott, F.S.A., who having long been engaged in the study of our pre-Norman antiquities, has been permitted by the Rev. P. T. Owry, vicar of the parish, to explore it. The crypt, when opened, was found to be filled to the extent of two-thirds of its height with earth and human remains. It consists of a central portion, in plan a sort of truncated trapezium, about 13ft. in length from east to west, and about 6ft. in breadth from north to south. At its western extremity are the remains of a small window, or "squint," which originally opened upon the nave of the church. This central chamber is surrounded by an aisle or passage, about 4ft. in width, communicating with it by arches opening upon its north, south, and east sides, and lighted by windows corresponding with those arches. The clear external width of the crypt is nearly 18ft. either way. The lateral aisles, however, so to speak, extend beyond the crypt itself for some distance westward towards the nave, with the aisles of which they originally communicated by ascents of steps, on the north and the south. The crypt is vaulted throughout in tufa, and has been plastered; the ancient plaster still exists in many places. The plan of this small and almost rude monument of remote antiquity is apparently identical in principle with the crypt of the ancient Church of St. Peter's at Rome, and with many of the earliest examples of the Basilican Confessio; and there can be little doubt that its design is attributable to the influence of the successors of St. Augustine in the seventh century, to which it probably belongs. It is certainly startling to find a "polyandrum"

and a "confessio" in Buckinghamshire, a county which is generally said to be rather poor in its ecclesiastical remains; and it is to be hoped that the authorities of the church will not allow the crypt to be again buried out of sight, as a very trifling outlay would suffice to pay for the removal of the soil. A plan of this interesting monument will appear in Mr. G. G. Scott's forthcoming essay on the "History of English Church Architecture."
