

HIGH WYCOMBE PARISH CHURCH.

PART I.

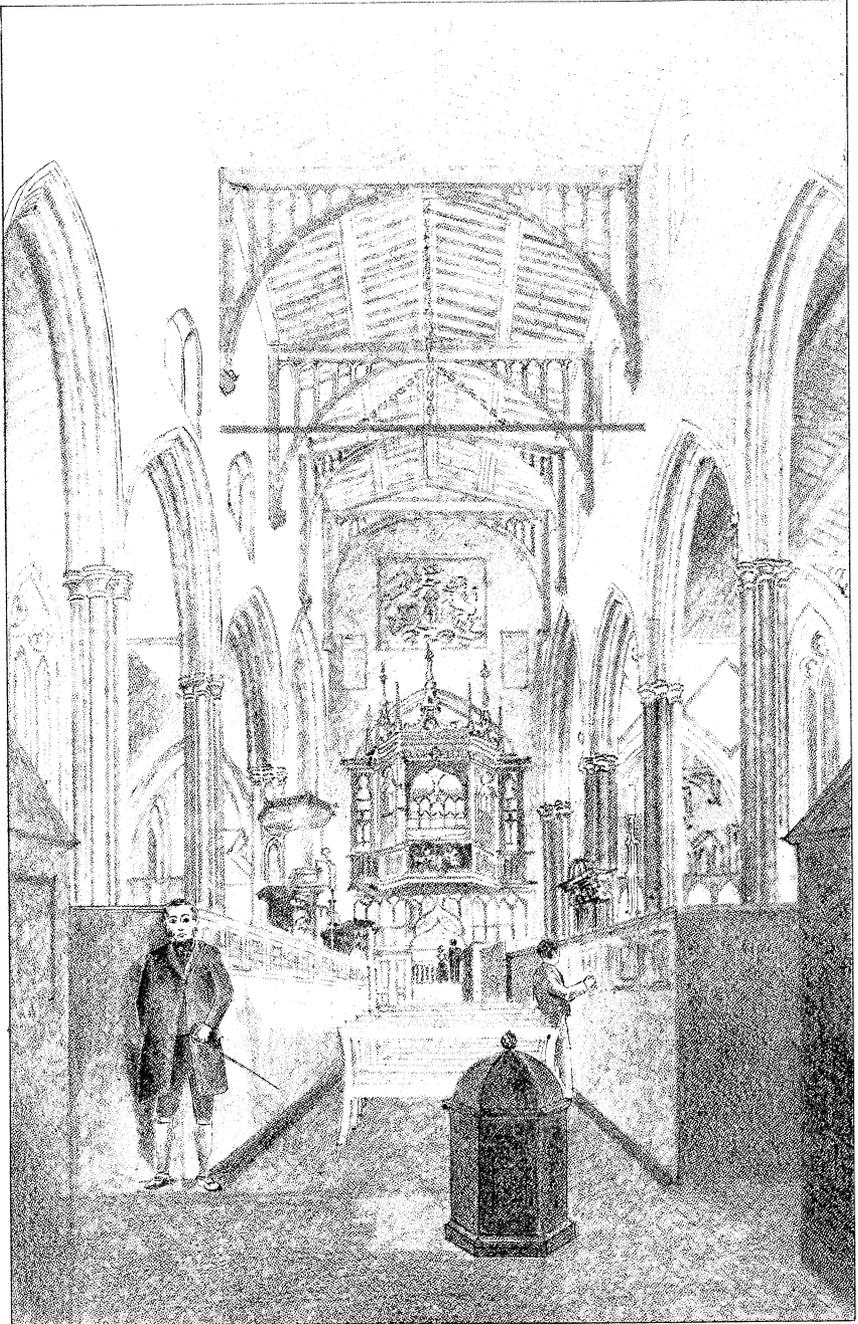
DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY.

BY R. S. DOWNS.

THE Parish Church of High Wycombe is dedicated to All Hallows, otherwise All Saints. In the will of John Wilcocks of Chepping Wycombe, dated July 5th, 1509, which I shall have occasion to quote at length later on, he desires his body to be buried before the Rood in "the Church of All-Hallonden-in-Wyc̄," which, doubtless, represents an archaic pronunciation of the dedication title. (*Cf.* Shakespeare's use of "All-Holland Eve.") In a manuscript description of Wycombe of the last century, apparently written about the year 1715, it is stated:—"The church is called the Church of All Hallows, as appears in the will of John (? Thomas) Battery, alias Parkins, dated 8th March, 1543, therein said to be the Mayor of the said Borough." The title of the dedication was also preserved in the designation of the western portion of the present Castle Street, which borders the churchyard on the north, and was formerly known as All Hallows' Lane.

The component parts of the church are a south porch with parvise above, west tower, nave with clerestory, and north and south aisles, transepts, chancel with vicar's aisle on the north, and Bower Chapel on the south.

The architectural features of the church may be thus briefly described. The aisles of the nave and the inner arch at the west end, south porch, and north chancel aisle are Early English, dating from about the middle of the thirteenth century. The pillars and arches of the nave, and six of the clerestory windows on each side are



High · Wycombe · Church.

AS IT WAS IN 1839.

Perpendicular, of the fifteenth century ; the tower, chancel, four of the clerestory windows, and Bower Chapel, late Perpendicular (Tudor) of the early part of the sixteenth century. The east window of the north chancel aisle is also a late Perpendicular insertion.

A Norman church was erected here, perhaps on the site of a still older edifice, between the years 1070 and 1092, and was consecrated by St. Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, acting under licence from Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln, probably in 1076. (RECORDS, Vol. III. p. 140.) No visible remains of this Early Norman edifice exist *in situ* in the walls and windows of the present church ; but there are some relics of that venerable building still left—portions of shafts, mouldings, capitals, and zigzag ornamentation having been found at various times in different parts of the building when alterations in the structure have been in progress. In 1872, such remains of the Norman church were discovered, worked in with its other component materials, when the east wall of the chancel was re-opened for the insertion of the memorial window to the second Lord Carrington. Most of these remnants of antiquity were re-embedded in the wall. During the restoration which has been carried out in recent years, stones of the most interesting architectural character have been discovered. Two of them found in 1889 are now preserved in a niche in the north aisle, and the story which they tell is a curious and instructive one, proving, as they do, that they formed part of the original Norman edifice, and have been remodelled and adapted to two subsequent styles of architecture. One of the stones exhibits the Norman chevron moulding of the eleventh century, the other has a capital of the same date. On the opposite side they show some Early English characteristics, proving that they were utilised for the second time in the extensive alterations introduced in the thirteenth century, one of them having a well-preserved capital of a column in that style cut upon it. They again underwent adaptation in the fifteenth century, when alterations in the Perpendicular style were made ; they were then placed in the facing of the walls, whence they were extracted in 1889. Those stones tell their own tale in unmistakable language : they exhibit in epitome the architectural story of the building (Figs. 1 and 2).

“The restoration of the outside of the Parish Church has brought to light a relic which, if I interpret it rightly, should henceforth be an object of peculiar interest. It is a piece of rough walling, built of the native boulderstone from the beds which overlie the chalk at Denner Hill and Walter’s Ash, and forming the lower part of the west wall of the north aisle of the nave below the great west window in that aisle, and close to the tower. . . . There can, I think, be little doubt that it is a remnant of the original church, built at his own expense by Swartling the thane, and consecrated by St. Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, soon after the Norman Conquest. It will be noticed that it does not occupy the entire breadth of the west aisle wall, but stops short near the buttress. This shows that the building of which it originally formed part was somewhat narrower than the present one; while its materials, situation, and general appearance indicate it as a genuine fragment of the earlier church. If this is so, it is the oldest bit of building in the town: a hundred years older than the ruined walls of St. John’s Hospital, which stand in front of the Grammar School; two hundred years older than the main body of the noble edifice of which it forms a part; and four hundred years older than the tall grey tower. . . . The monkish compiler, William of Malmesbury, who has preserved in his ‘Life of St. Wulstan’ the story of the building and consecration of the church, and of the miraculous cure of Swartling’s maidservant, spells the thane’s name incorrectly. So does the transcriber of Domesday Book, from which record we gather that the thane “Swarting” and his son Herding or Harding had become, by purchase, landowners not only at Wycombe, but at Bradenham (where they owned the whole parish) Horsendon, Cheddington, and Caldecot. . . . ‘Hearding, the son of Sweartling, of Wycombe,’ appears in the list of the original money benefactors of St. Alban’s Abbey as a subscriber of twenty shillings—equivalent to £30 of our money. Possibly the Hardings who live in the district are his descendants. . . . Whereabouts was the thane’s house, where the bishop, with Coleman his chaplain, went to dine after consecrating the church, and where he cured the maid with the swollen face? Probably in Castle Street, where the footpath leads over

Castle Hill, on the site of the old Parsonage Farmhouse, the homestead of the hide of good land which stretched from the Amersham Hill to Totteridge, extending south as far as the London Road, and which with the tithes of the parish formed the original endowment of the church. I take it that Swartling, as founder of the church, was the donor of this hide of land; and while the original endowment lasted the Rectors of Wycombe must have been wealthy men.”*

This Norman church, judging from the remains of its arches, capitals, groining, etc., that have been from time to time discovered, was a large and substantial edifice, and was left undisturbed for about two centuries, when it was removed to make way for the present building. The Early English structure was probably commenced in the early part of the second-half of the thirteenth century, and abundant evidence has been found to prove that a large proportion of the materials of the original church was utilized in its re-construction. If we except the western tower the ground plan of the Early English edifice was probably of the same form and extent as the present church; but the walls were lower, the roofs steep pitched, and the tower was central. The nave had then no clerestory, and the walls terminated about a foot above the present arches, whence rose the roof to nearly the same height as the one now in existence. The windows, with the exception of the Perpendicular insertions in the chancel aisles, were the same as at present. There was probably a deeply-recessed entrance at the west end of the church with a large five-light window above it, the jambs and hood moulding of which still exist. These important alterations and additions were completed in 1273. Philip, the old vicar, under whose superintendence the work was most likely carried out, resigned his cure, and was succeeded as vicar of the new church by Robert Maynard, on his presentation to the Living by the Convent of Godstow in April, 1273, by the Abbess of which the work of restoration and enlargement is said to have been principally promoted. One peculiar characteristic of the Early English walling, which is especially noticeable

* Extract from a letter by Mr. E. J. Payne.

on the north side of the church, is its construction in alternate squares of chalk and flint.

During the next two hundred years it appears that few alterations were made in the fabric except necessary repairs. During the fifteenth century, however, important alterations were effected in the body of the church. The roof of the nave was completely removed, the pillars remodelled, the walls carried up considerably higher, and the six westernmost clerestory windows on each side inserted. Instead of the former steep pitched roof the present one which is almost flat was erected, and made to rest upon the beautiful corbels, which were successfully re-coloured when the interior of the church was restored. At the same time the walls of the aisles were raised, and the present roofs took the place of those of the thirteenth century; but in the transepts the walls retained their former height, so that they are now but little higher than those of the aisles, and the transeptal arrangement of the church has nearly disappeared, except when the building is viewed from the outside. From the appearance of some of the beams in the aisles, it is probable that they were coloured with a kind of ribbon pattern. Those in the nave have been re-coloured.

Other great and important alterations were effected during the Tudor period of the sixteenth century, when the building was brought into exactly the same state, as far as its structural arrangement is concerned, as it exists now. During the incumbency of Roland Messenger, presented to the living in 1511, who was a person of some architectural pretensions, the church once more underwent the process of complete restoration. The central tower, so common a feature in Early English edifices, was taken down, and rebuilt where it now stands at the west end. The transept roofs were lowered, the nave was continued eastward to meet the chancel, and the two easternmost clerestory windows on each side were then inserted. They differ slightly in design from the other clerestory windows. The same may be noted also in reference to the two compartments of the roof immediately over the choir-stalls, which are of a plainer pattern than those in the other part of the nave. The position and extent

of the Early English tower can be easily traced in the exterior of the church. To make way for the west tower, the doorway at that end with the tracery of its large handsome window above were removed. The jambs were allowed to remain, and now form the inner arch at that end of the nave. The manner in which Roland Messenger built his tower on to the nave is considered a clever piece of work, both as regards its design and execution. The tower was completed in 1522. The scroll work and pinnacles are modern.

About the same time the present columns and Tudor arches of the chancel were erected, probably by Roland Messenger, when he built the tower, for the arches are of the same construction in both those parts of the church. There is a peculiarity in the construction of the present chancel which ought to be noticed—it is narrower at its eastern extremity than at the entrance from the nave. This may have arisen from the present pillars and arches having been built further back than their predecessors in order to increase the width of the chancel, and thus render it more proportionate with the body of the church.

Since these important alterations and additions were completed, there has been no further modification in the design of the building, except in a few minor details, such as the addition of pinnacles to the tower and the old porch. The latter were removed two years ago, when the porch was restored.

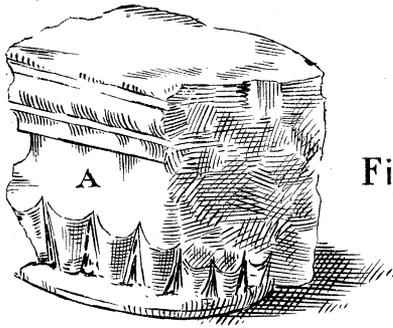
During the incumbency of the late vicar, the Rev. R. Chilton, the whole church, with the exception of the Tower, was thoroughly restored, the work being accomplished in sections during a period extending over twenty years. In 1873-75 the interior was restored under the direction of Mr. G. E. Street, R.A., at a cost of about £6,000; in 1887-89, the exterior walls were restored at a cost of £1,600; Mr. A. Mardon Mowbray, F.R.I., B.A., of Oxford, and Mr. J. Oldrid Scott, being architects, and under the direction of the latter the restoration of the south porch was completed in October, 1893, at a cost of £630. In 1894 the figures of the four Evangelists were placed in the niches in the front of the porch as a memorial to Mr. Edward Wheeler of High Wycombe, by his widow, at a cost of £140.

There are five doors to the church, two on each side of the north and south aisles and one in the tower, the principal entrances being by the south porch and west door. A path which formerly led to the door in the north aisle, opposite the porch, is not now in existence, having been disused for many years.

The churchyard is large and intersected with paths, leading from Church Square and Church Street into Castle Street. The beautiful iron gates at the entrance to the churchyard on the south, were the gift of the Earl of Shelburne in 1770, and formerly stood at the St. Mary Street entrance to the Abbey at the bottom of Marlow Hill.

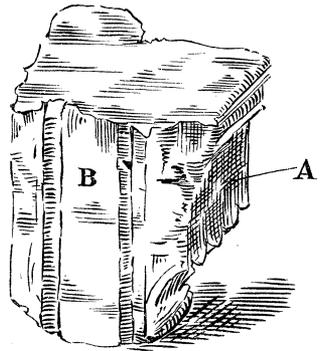
On the eastern boundary of the churchyard there existed in former times a range of stable buildings, with thatched roofs. An alarming fire occurred there in 1793, when six valuable horses were destroyed before they could be rescued from the flames, which spread with amazing rapidity, and it was almost by a miracle that the adjacent premises escaped total destruction. There was another fire in the same buildings in 1855, which was the act of an incendiary in revenge for some imaginary grievance of which he supposed himself to have been the victim.

Formerly there was a clump of unsightly houses standing opposite the tower, within the churchyard, which then extended further westward than at present. They had been suffered to fall into a most dilapidated condition, and had become not only a disgrace to the approach to the church on that side, but also a disfigurement to the town. They were, therefore, very properly removed in the year 1816, and the cellars belonging to them converted into vaults, which are now beneath the street. Besides being an improvement to the churchyard the thoroughfare was considerably widened, thus giving increased facility for traffic at that important point in Church Street. In 1855 the western boundary of the churchyard was brought into a line with the road leading to the cemetery, which had then been recently laid out. Another old building stood on the north side of the churchyard under a large sycamore tree, opposite the Priory. It was used for many years by a Mr. Hughes, as a cow-shed, but was

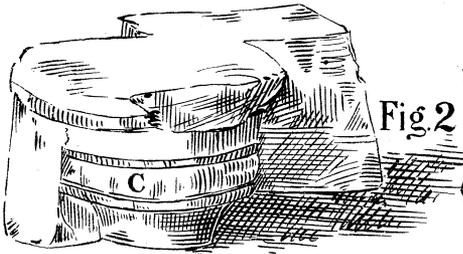


Norman Capital.

Fig. 1

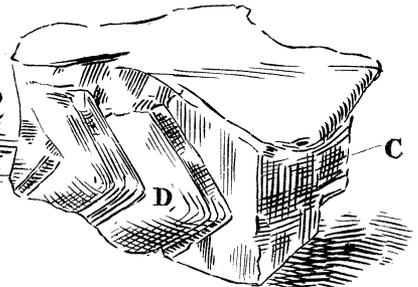


Early English Jamb.



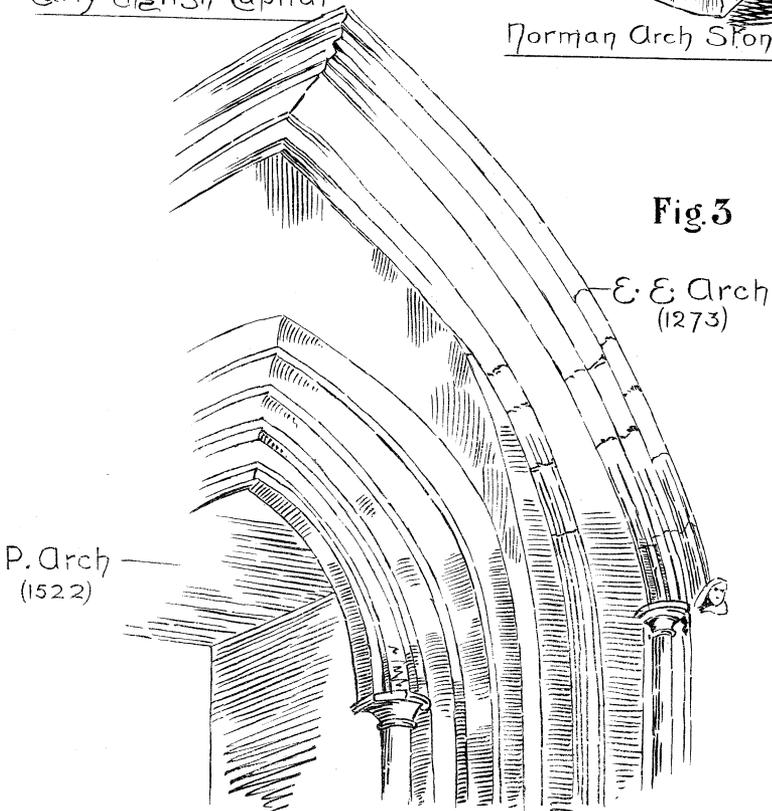
Early English Capital

Fig. 2



Norman Arch Stone.

Fig. 3



P. Arch
(1522)

E. E. Arch
(1273)

removed in 1816, and rebuilt, where it still stands, in the yard of Mr. Broughton, stone-mason, Oxford Road. In more recent years, another improvement of great public utility has taken place in opening up Castle Street, in accomplishing which a considerable portion of the churchyard was laid down as a road, thus giving a direct communication between the west end of the town and the railway station.

The most notable of the inscriptions in the churchyard will be given subsequently.

The architecture of the church is remarkable for boldness of design rather than for elaborate ornamentation, so that its beauty presents itself when the building is viewed as a whole and not in detail. Nevertheless, some of the earlier arches and windows, the south porch, and the caps of the shafts in the E.E. windows possess individual points of good design and execution, and will repay a careful and minute inspection. As is often the case, the northern part of the church is older than the southern.

The inner arch at the west end of the nave is formed by the prolongation of the jambs of the original Early English west window, which was removed when the present tower was erected. The juxtaposition of this First-Pointed arch with the Tudor arch that carries the tower, is one of the most interesting features in this part of the church (Fig. 3). There is a fine three-light window with a cusped circle in the head at the west end of each of the aisles.

The nave consists of seven bays supported by clustered columns, with plain capitals and standing on octagonal bases. The clerestory consists of eight two-light windows on each side. There are two large three-light windows in the transepts; that on the south side is similar to those at the end of the aisles. The one in the north transept is modern, of a later style, and was inserted during the restoration in 1875, in the place of a very peculiar wheel window. The original window was of the same design as that in the south transept, but was altered in the year 1827, by introducing cusplings and a wheel, made of plaster, in the centre of the tracery. The wheel was cast in the same mould as the one in the gable in the east front of

Wycombe Abbey, by William Stanners, a local mason, who plastered the exterior of the church in the year just mentioned. In the south transept there is also a small window of a single light, trefoiled, which is said to have been blocked up in the time of Cromwell and reopened in 1827.

In the north wall, near the vicarage door, is a pointed arch, probably one of a series, as there is a portion of another and similar one adjoining and springing from it. Lying within the arch there was formerly a stone sarcophagus upon what appears to be a founder's tomb. The stone coffin was demolished some years ago, when the church was suffering from one of those intermittent attacks of restoration which it has been its misfortune to undergo. At the same time portions of zigzag mouldings—remains of the ancient Norman church—were discovered.

The chancel is reached by four steps from the nave under a lofty pointed arch. The arches leading from the transepts into the chancel aisles are lower, that on the north side being of particularly fine construction. During the restoration of the interior in 1875, a square window of four lights above the chancel arch was built up. Hiding this window from view there was, previous to 1858, a large picture of the royal arms, flanked by the two Tables of Commandments which are now placed in the tower.

The plaster and whitewash with which the chancel was ceiled, were removed in 1875, and the present panelled roof of oak substituted. It is curved, and out of keeping with the rest of the church, but follows the construction of the ancient edifice. An arcade of four pointed arches on each side opens into the side chapels. Two windows in this part of the church are completely blocked by the monuments to the Earl of Shelburne and Lady Shelburne. Another was partly hidden by a tablet to Isaac King, Esq., which, however, has been very properly removed.

The space at the west end of the church was formerly used as a place of assemblage for vestry meetings, which were not always of a pacific nature, especially when questions upon which the public were strongly divided came on for discussion. The Church Sunday School was

also formerly held here; the boys were instructed on the north and the girls on the south side of the nave, the necessary room being parted off from the rest of the church by a high wooden screen, panelled. At the entrance to the church from the tower was the organ loft, flanked on each side by galleries, beneath which was a block of high-backed pews distinguished by the curious, but by no means inappropriate, title of "the cucumber frames." Happily the pews of the horse-box style gradually disappeared, and gave place to seats of a more convenient and less exclusive character. The whole church was at one time very much over-pewed, but a step in the right direction was taken in 1865, when the high pews were cut down and made into moderate-sized sittings, and these have since given place to chairs. The glass doors, now in the tower, at one time formed the entrance to the nave under the gallery.

The dimensions of the church internally are as follow:—Length of west porch, 24 feet; length of nave, 118 feet; length of chancel, 60 feet; length of transept, 73 feet; breadth of the church, $71\frac{1}{3}$ feet. This gives a total length of 202 feet, and a superficial area of nearly 1,600 square yards. The nave is 48 feet high, and the chancel aisles 26 feet.

The sanctuary is large, and raised four steps above the chancel, and paved with encaustic tiles. There is neither piscina nor structural sedilia—the place of the latter being supplied by modern oak seats placed on the south side. On the same side of the altar is a small table used as a credence. At the east end the wall is now tiled, and has a large white Latin cross in the centre; but previous to recent restorations it was panelled in plain oak. The altar, made from a design by G. E. Street, Esq., R.A., is mainly of oak with five walnut panels in front, which are arched and trefoiled. It was consecrated on the Feast of the Epiphany, 1872. Formerly, unsightly railings ran across the whole breadth of the chancel and its aisles; but the portion immediately in front of the Holy Table had been removed before the recent restoration was commenced. Three altar frontals are in use. A handsome one of crimson velvet was presented to the church by members of the congregation, in 1872. It is divided into the three usual parts by delicately em-

broidered orphreys. In the central compartment is the sacred monogram with the emblems of All Saints, the crown and palm branches, on each side. In August, 1877, a new covering for the altar was presented by a lady of the congregation. It is of purple cloth and overhangs the Holy Table about ten inches, the suspended part being embroidered with crosses, beautifully worked at intervals in gold and white silk. It was made by Messrs. Jones and Willis.

Most of our old parish churches possessed lady chapels, which were in the majority of cases dedicated simply in honour of the Blessed Virgin; but in some instances they were named in her honour under some particular title, as our Lady of the Boat, our Lady of the Manger, and so on. The south chancel aisle in Wycombe Church is dedicated to our Lady of the Bower, and is, therefore, known as the Bower Chapel. The term Bower is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *bur*, an old word which is used by Chaucer as signifying, not as it generally does now, an arbour, but an inner room or chamber, as opposed to a hall. For instance, in his "Miller's Tale:—

"Herest thou not Absalom,
That chaunteth thus under our boure's wall?"

So also an old Scotch ballad:—"There shall neither coal nor candle light be seen within our bower;" and Milton likewise uses the terms in "hall or bower." In old ballads the word is often met with in the sense of a private room or chamber. "My lady's bower" is frequently found in old serenades. The dedication of a side chapel to our Lady of the Bower is somewhat rare, and doubtless had reference to the Annunciation, as pictorial illustrations of that event generally represent the Blessed Virgin in a bower or chamber, when St. Gabriel appears to her. The Blessed Virgin herself is called "Christes bour" in a curious fragment of early English poetry, which has been preserved to us in the pages of our Buckinghamshire chronicler, Roger of Wendover (Flor. Hist. sub anno 1170). He is relating the legend of St. Godric, the hermit, and the term occurs in a hymn to the Virgin, which the Holy Mother is said to have taught the man of God to sing. The words are as follow:—

“ Seinte Marie, clane virgine,
 Moder Jesu Christ Nazarene,
 Onfo, scild, help thin Godrich
 Onfang, bring heali widh the in Godes rich.
 Seinte Marie, Christes bour,
 Meidenes clenhed, moderes flour,
 Deliver mine sennen, regne in min mod,
 Bringe me to blisse wit thi selfe, God.”

Wendover, in rendering the hymn into Latin, translates “bour” by *thalamus*, which answers very closely to the explanation of the word Bower that I have just given. The Bower Chapel at Wycombe is of very late Perpendicular architecture, plain almost unto ugliness; but the walling contains ample evidence that it was erected on the site of an earlier chapel, and reconstructed to a considerable extent from the remains of the former edifice. It was, before the iconoclasts of the sixteenth century defaced it, one of the most elaborately-decorated portions of the church. Towards the close of the fifteenth century it was separated from the rest of the building by a handsome oaken parclose, erected by Richard Redhead. This screen bore the following inscription in old English characters:—
 “Praye for the Soules of Rycherde Redehede, Agnes hys wyfe, ther son William and Johan hys wyfe, the whyche Richard bilded this parclose with tymbre in the yere off oure Lord God MCCCCLXVIII., on whos soules God haue mercie. Amen.”

The persons mentioned here were most probably buried in this part of the church. The above mentioned William Redhead was Mayor of Wycombe in 15 Edward IV., 2 Richard III., and 1 Henry VII. This screen, and also the one at the entrance to the north chancel aisle, were destroyed in 1863. They were fine specimens of the wood carver’s art of the period when they were erected, as evidenced by portions of them which are still preserved. The Bower Chapel was formerly a chantry and possessed an altar. At the Suppression it was returned as worth £4 16s. 6d., Sir Henry Forest, priest, aged 73, and entitled to a stipend of £6. There was formerly a great number of altars in this church, no less than eight being in the north aisle alone. By a return made in 1518, we find, however, that

besides the High Altar and the Bower Altar, there were only four remaining, viz., S. Clement's, S. Nicolas', Jesus', and Resurrection. A movement is on foot at the present time for fitting up the Bower aisle as a side chapel—a memorial to the late vicar, the Rev. R. Chilton. The above-mentioned screen will be restored to its former position, with the inscription to the Redheads facing inwards. Another inscription commemorating Mr. Chilton's vicariate of twenty-five years, will be placed on the outside facing the south aisle.

There was, less than forty years ago, a large Gothic pew reared aloft right up in the chancel arch, immediately under the royal arms. It was erected by the Marquis of Lansdowne, and was reached by a staircase from the Bower Chapel. The openings in the pew towards the church were glazed, and could be opened and closed in a manner very similar to a sash window. The pew was removed in September, 1858, and deposited in safety for a time at the west end of the church. It was subsequently removed to Wycombe Abbey, and now forms a kind of gallery at the west end of the large hall, which Lord Carrington had erected there in 1891. It is a handsome piece of work in dark oak, and far better suited to its present location than to the place it formerly occupied in the church. The ceiling of the hall is adorned with several hatchments, which were formerly in the church. The oak seats in the chancel, which were substituted for the Lansdowne pew, were erected in 1864.

The view of the interior of the church, which accompanies these notes, is taken from a water-colour drawing made in 1839, by Mr. James Chapman, who was at that time an assistant-master in the school kept at the Vicarage, by the Rev. J. C. Williams, Curate-in-charge. The picture gives a capital representation of the old Gothic pew up in the chancel arch, and the Jacobean pulpit, with sounding board above and clerk's box and reading-desk in front. Against the pillar, opposite the pulpit, is the large square Corporation pew, and the Mayor's seat can be seen in outline, towering up in all its municipal pride and grandeur. Up the centre of the nave between the high-backed pews are shown the free-seat benches, and westward of them the font. The figure

on the left is a sketch of the then old clerk or sexton—most probably the latter. The drawing also shows the screens at the entrance to the north and south chancel aisles. No view of the west end of the church, showing the old organ-loft, appears to be in existence.

Before the insertion of the present east window that part of the church was ornamented by a large picture, as an altar-piece, illustrative of St. Paul preaching to the British Druids, which is now in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. It is unquestionably a work of high art and great merit, both as regards the originality of the conception, and the truth and finish exhibited in its execution. It is from the pencil of that distinguished painter, John Hamilton Mortimer, Esq., R.A., and was presented to the church by Dr. Bates of Little Missenden, in 1778. Mortimer received the handsome sum of one hundred guineas from the Society of Arts as a recognition of his genius, when this picture was exhibited in the gallery of Spring Gardens. The picture was restored by Lovegrove in 1839, at the expense of the late Lord Carrington. It was removed into the Council Chamber in 1872, when the east window was erected to the memory of his Lordship; but before it was placed there, it was successfully cleaned and renovated by the late Mr. Steers of Wycombe. Mortimer, when a youth, had led a gay and reckless life, launching into most of the fashionable follies of his day, thereby sowing the seeds of disease, which brought him to an early grave. In consequence of continued ill-health he left London, and took up his abode at Little Missenden, to be near his friend and patron, Dr. Bates, where he died Feb. 4, 1779. He was interred at Little Missenden; but his body was subsequently removed to Wycombe, and deposited in the vault belonging to the Welles family in the chancel. The Welles vault is directly beneath the sanctuary. The Carrington vault extends the full length of the chancel from that of the Welles to the choir. Mortimer was first buried in the centre of the chancel; but when the Carrington vault was constructed, no less than twenty-seven coffins, with the remains they contained, were shifted, Mortimer being then placed immediately beneath the altar.

In the north and south walls of the Sacrarium there were formerly two small single-light windows, one on each side, and the figures of Moses and Aaron painted on wooden panels, which had previously contained the two tables of the Commandments, the words being plainly visible in a side light under the figures. The paintings were of no artistic value, and were destroyed at the restoration in 1875. The windows are now built up.

The old font was plain, octagonal, and of a Perpendicular pattern. The present font is from the studio of Mr. Earp, of London, and was executed from the design of Mr. Street, especially prepared for this church, when the interior was being restored under his direction. The font itself is of Caen stone, and stands on a plinth of Mansfield stone in the form of a Maltese cross, each portion being cut from a single block. The design of the carving is a representation of the four Evangelists, with the symbols of the Gospels within alternate cinque-foiled panels, each under an elaborately carved ogee canopy, and having figures of angels at the points of intersection. These richly wrought panels contain in order (1) St. Matthew; (2) The symbol of his Gospel, an eagle with the face of a man, as described by Ezekiel, representing our Lord's human nature; (3) St. Mark; (4) A lion, signifying the kingly office of Christ; (5) St. Luke; (6) The ox, pointing to the sacrificial aspect of the life and death of Christ, so prominently set forth in the third Gospel; (7) St. John; (8) An eagle, typifying the divinity of Christ, and the sublime nature of the Gospel. The stem of the font is also octagonal, and ornamented with representations of the instruments of our blessed Lord's passion, in the following order:— (1) The initial letters of Pilate's superscription in Latin, I.N.R.I.; (2) The ladder, spear, and sponge; (3) The hammer, nails, and pincers; (4) The cross; (5) The seamless coat, and the dice with which the Roman soldiers cast lots upon that vesture; (6) The pierced hands and feet, and the sacred heart; (7) The holy chalice; (8) The pillar and the scourge.

The lectern was the gift of the Misses Giles. It is of polished brass supported by a twisted stem, standing on four feet, and is from a design of Street's. It is

plain, but of good pattern, and surmounted by a Latin cross.

The old Jacobean pulpit was of carved oak of the seventeenth century, and above it was a large sounding-board. The present pulpit is of Caen stone, of a Perpendicular pattern, with richly carved panels.

On the opposite side of the nave there was a special pew of large dimensions for the use of the Mayor and Corporation when attending Divine Service in their official capacity. The Mayor's seat was a prominent feature in this part of the church, and the back of it reached some distance up the pillar of the south transept. This was replaced by one of less pretentious proportions in 1865, and is now happily numbered among the things of the past. In the Corporation Records there is an entry for rebuilding these seats in 1728. The Mayor's desk, which is still used when the Town Council attend church in state, is a curious specimen of the carver's art, even for the eighteenth century. It consists of a book-rest supported by two female figures with expanded wings. There are also places provided for the service books and a kneeler. The Mayor and Corporation formerly attended church every Sunday. In the MS. description of Wycombe of last century, to which I have already referred, the following particulars are given relative to this matter:—"The Mayor on Sundays and public days goes to church and to the Town-hall in this order. First goes the Beadle with his staff, then the two Bailiffs with white staves, then the Sergeant-at-Mace, in a cloak, carrying a large silver mace, gilt with gold; then goes the Mayor in his gown, always walking with a silver staff, made in fashion of a handsome walking-stick or cane; anciently, he used to walk with an iron staff in the same fashion; then goes the High Steward, if present; then the Recorder; then the Aldermen in their gowns, two and two, according to seniority as Aldermen. The Town Clerk and such Burgesses as are present, going two and two, close the procession." Now-a-days, the Mayor being a churchman, the Corporation attend service in the morning of Sunday, at the expiration of one mayoralty and the commencement of the next,

and on the Sundays next preceding their quarterly meetings.

One of the most pleasing features of the church, as far as ornamentation goes, is the beautiful corbels upon which the roofs of the nave and aisles are made to rest. They had been so defaced with whitewash and other rubbish that, until after the recent restoration, it was next to an impossibility to determine what they represented. They were then, however, well cleaned, and those in the nave re-coloured after the old pattern, and they now display something of their pristine beauty. There is a particularly fine bust of a bishop in the north-west angle of the south aisle. The original colouring on this and a few others still remains. The corbels represent a variety of personages—monks, nuns, bishops, priests, deacons, and others, all find a place among them. The corbels in the chancel and north aisle of the nave are all of wood and plain; the rest are of stone and carved. The late Mr. E. Wheeler had the four small heads carved, which form the termination of the hood mouldings of the transept arches, in memory of the Queen's Jubilee. The Church is represented by the vicar of the parish and the Bishop of the diocese, on the south side, and the State by the Queen and Lord Carrington, the patron of the living, on the north.

In the north aisle near the west end there are several openings in the wall. Two of these openings are evidently doorways, and led from the church, as indicated by the hinges which remain, and gave communication to a building of some kind formerly existing there, the position and height of which can be easily traced on the outside of the church. It was probably a vestry and sacristy.

The walls of the church are for the most part constructed of flint with stone dressings, and were bedaubed with stucco in 1827; but all that has now been removed. In some parts the Early English walls are composed of chalk and flint in small squares, a peculiarity that was noticed by Rickman in "The Ecclesiastical and Architectural Topography of England," published in 1849. Chalk was also extensively used in the windows and arches, but most of it has been replaced by stone.

On the gable at the east end of the chancel there is a stone cross, the gift of Messrs. Broughton, of Wycombe, who did the stonework of the east window in 1872. The cross on the nave was given by the Rev. R. Chilton, vicar, in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee. At the west end of the aisles are small crocketed pinnacles formerly surmounted by crosses. The parapet of the north chancel aisle is plain; but that on the side is pierced and of a later date. All the roofs are flat and covered with lead except the chancel, which is steep pitched and tiled.

The tower is a massive square structure, 108 feet in height (98 feet to the battlements), and contains a fine peal of ten bells. (For an account of the bells, chimes, etc., see RECORDS, Vol. VI., p. 341.) The tower was erected by Roland Messenger, vicar, during the alterations made in the church in the sixteenth century, and was completed in 1522. The pinnacles and battlements are modern, and were added by John, Earl of Shelburne, in 1755. The work was executed by a Wycombe tradesman, Banister Watts, who then carried on business in White Hart Street as a stonemason, which through three intervening generations has descended to Mr. L. Broughton, of Oxford Road, who has in his possession some old account books belonging to the firm, from one of which I have taken the following:—

April ye 12, 1754.

Mr. Skimmacker Dr. to Banister Watts,		£	s.	d.
To	50-3 feet of Portland paving in the church for the Iron Rails at 1s. 4d. p. foot	3	7	0
July 14, 1754.	To mack the Addition to the Tower in Freestone according to the Designe made, will Come to	172	8	0
	And to be don in Portland will com to	329	9	0

The first of these extracts refers to the stonework in which the iron railings are fixed that are placed as a protection round the Earl of Shelburne's monument in the north chancel aisle. This memorial is by Scheemaker, who it would appear from the above, drew the plans for the scroll work and pinnacles of the tower, and as they are of Portland stone, the latter of the two estimates given above must have been accepted. Before

the removal of the west gallery there was no proper entrance to the church by way of the tower, the basement of which was used as a sort of lumber room for the fire engines, the sexton's tools, etc.

The south porch regarded historically must be considered as coeval with the Early English edifice erected during the middle part of the thirteenth century. Over it is a parvise which appears to have been at one time used as a charnel house, for when the door communicating with the south aisle, which had been plastered up, was re-opened in 1827, the place was found to contain a great number of human bones. Internally it was constructed as a dovecote, and the remains of bones and feathers in the holes of the walls proved that it had been so used in recent times, no doubt by the vicars. There are no steps to the parvise, and it can only be reached by the help of a ladder. A new oaken door was placed at the entrance in 1875. Originally this room was lighted with three windows, a small lancet on each side, and a two-light trefoil headed window in front. At a subsequent period the ridge of the roof appears to have been lowered, and the south window blocked up by a double niche containing statues, which was constructed in front of it. Later still, pinnacles were added, and in 1827 some repairs were carried out, the decayed portions were bricked up and the whole front of the porch covered with Roman cement. At that time the south window, which has once more been brought to light during the recent restoration, was discovered. About the same time the figures disappeared from the niches. The holy water stoupe on the right-hand side of the entrance remains in its ancient condition. The restoration in 1893 was effected in the most conservative spirit, even to imitating the colour of the old mortar and the old method of pointing. The ancient stonework was likewise retained wherever possible, being renewed only in those parts where decay rendered removal of the old work an absolute necessity, so that the porch now represents what is supposed to have been the architectural features of the original structure.

On either side of the interior there is an arcade of three trefoiled recesses, divided by slender circular shafts

with bases of a similar form, standing upon stone sedilia, and detached from the wall. The capitals are ornamented with sculptured foliage, but in different designs. The roof is groined, and supported by four circular shafts. The ribs meet in a boss in the centre. The inner arch, which is hooded, is supported by two slender columns on each side, with beautifully ornamented capitals.

An account of the Monuments, Parish Register, etc., will appear in a subsequent issue of the RECORDS.

I have to thank Mr. T. Thurlow, architect, of High Wycombe, for the drawings of the illustrations figured 1, 2, and 3.
