

THE RESTORATION OF WING CHURCH.

(Extracts from Mr. T. Oldrid Scott's Report, communicated by the Rev. F. H. TATHAM, Vicar.)

THIS noble and interesting church is almost as valuable architecturally as it is from an archæological point of view. The three western arches on each side of the nave, as well as the apse and the very curious crypt, are undoubtedly Saxon in their origin. Whether the chancel arch is of the same early date it is difficult to say. If so, it can only be ranked with the triumphal arches in basilicas, and not with the narrow door-like chancel arches which were generally, and in early times, in this country. It hardly looks of the same workmanship as the nave arches, being much rougher and without the projecting impost mouldings. The eastern arches of the nave are of Early English date, the aisles are decorated, and the stately tower and clerestory Perpendicular. There are also windows of the latter style inserted in the apse and the aisles.

The south porch is excellent fifteenth century work, but it has suffered from its stonework having decayed and being coated with cement. The same has happened to the buttresses and, in a smaller degree, to the windows.

All the dressed stonework of the exterior seems to be some kind of fire-stone from below the chalk, and this, as is always more or less the case, has suffered from decay, necessitating the liberal use of Roman cement, which was the favourite way of repairing stonework at the beginning of this century. The walls, with the exception of the tower, are everywhere faced with rough cast plastering made with the fine gravel which belongs to the district. The walling is extremely rough, and the architect was at first of opinion that it was original and

should be retained, but, inasmuch as it overlapped the quoin-stones at the angles of the north aisle, and the stone was found in a much better condition than he anticipated, the rough cast has been wholly removed. The stonework of the apse was more finished and the joints filled in to a smooth surface with very good mortar. Here, too, the rough cast was removed, and underneath it were, in two of the bays on the south side, some very rude round-headed clerestory windows with a curious triangular hooding, and about six feet from the ground in the south bay a remarkable little pointed window, which may be a low side or leper's window. These windows have all been shown from the outside; they cannot be opened into the church, the former being above the level of the ceiling, and the latter being behind the tomb of Sir Robert Dormer.

Round the apse and along the north of the church some courses of brickwork were inserted at the ground level to form a kind of plinth, and on the south side a broad band of cement apparently with the same object. These have been replaced by a stone plinth round the whole church except the tower. The buttresses to the south aisle and porch had been so largely patched with bricks and cement, both of which had to so great an extent perished, that they have been replaced with new buttresses of Chilmark stone.

The parapets of the aisles were in good order, but that of the south porch was much splintered. This has been renewed and the pinnacles (the stools for which were still extant) supplied. The soil around the porch has been cleared away about six inches and the floor of the porch lowered four inches.

The north porch, which was in a dilapidated condition and which is used as the vestry, has been wholly rebuilt; the window and the decorated doorway with its ball flower mouldings being used again. The porch appeared to have been rebuilt before, and on that occasion also the old doorway must have been re-used as now; among the material of the porch, which was principally rubble and brick were found, when it was pulled down, a remarkable Norman corbel and a large portion of a carved stone.

Over the chancel arch a double window of rude

design with a mid-wall shaft or baluster was discovered. The arch of this on the outside is composed of a double course of Roman bricks. This window has been opened into the church, and protected on the outside by a glazed frame, pending further advice as to how it should be treated.

The aisle windows are throughout of beautiful design, most of them are decorated in style, the others having been inserted in the fifteenth century. They had all suffered to some extent, and had most of them been repaired with cement. The architect thought it would be a mistake to get rid of all the minor cement repairs, and has left these alone except where mischief was going on. The labels, however, have been made sound with new stonework, and the graceful little beak head corbels, where they had disappeared, have been restored, also the sills, jambs, and mullions, where they were in a really bad state.

In the interior of the church the walls have throughout been carefully cleansed and recoloured. The architect in his report speaks as follows:—"The chancel screen is original up to the capitals on its upright timbers. It is quite clear from the position of the doorway which led on to the rood loft (this was bricked up but has now been opened) that the upper part of the screen must have projected considerably towards the nave; probably this was carried by groining springing from the capitals which remain—I greatly wish this addition to the screen could be made. It would have a most beautiful effect and add much to the dignity of this part of the church. The nave roof is a very fine example of its style, but the apse has nothing better than a plain plaster ceiling with a common cornice such as is used in houses. I should recommend that a carefully-designed panelled ceiling should be substituted." These recommendations have been thoroughly and successfully carried out. A beautiful panelled and bossed ceiling of oak resting on a floriated cornice of the same, has taken the place of the plaster, and a rich and deeply coved top has been placed upon the screen, springing from the old capitals and meeting the step of the newly-opened rood loft door. This is a very marked improvement, and adds most materially to the general beauty of the church.

Of minor improvements, we may mention that the font has been placed near the south door and mounted upon a pedestal. The organ, which fills the western tower, has been enriched with a gamba stop; a lectern has been presented by Mr. Webster, of Aylesbury (who has carried out the work of restoration), in memory of his father, the late Alexander L. Webster, of Wing; and a stained window in the north aisle by the family of the late Rev. P. T. Ouvry, Vicar of Wing. The whole work has cost something over £2,000.
