

The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Milborne Port.

BY C. E. PONTING, F.S.A.

THE plan of this Church consists of chancel with sacristy and chapel on the north, north and south transepts with tower at the crossing, and nave with north aisle of five bays.

The nave, north aisle and north transept were rebuilt in 1869 with the exception of parts eastward of the south door of the former which, with the three-light window here, are 15th century work, and are mainly undisturbed (Plate III). The other three south windows of the nave are copied from this with some elaboration of moulding and carving.

The earliest work is to be seen on the outside of the chancel particularly on the south, where the upper part of the wall appears to have been ornamented with a pilaster-and-lintel treatment in two stages (Plates I and II). The lower stage is higher than the upper, and the pilasters are spaced at double the distance apart; these rest on a square projecting course and the caps generally appear to have been plain, formed only by splaying off the lintel-course between them, but the bay of this stage which is fairly complete has a double pilaster on one side—one part in advance of the other, and both with carved caps (Plate II). All the pilasters of the upper stage have carved caps—mainly foliage—one with a kind of trefoil fleur-de-lys, and support the lintel-course, above which is a moulded eaves-course of, apparently, later date. Below the lower



CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, MILBORNE PORT.
General View of the Church from the S.E.

From a Photograph by Mr. H. St. George Gray.

course is inserted a moulded string-course which stops short of the windows; it was evidently continued along the east and north sides—a piece remains by the sacristy.

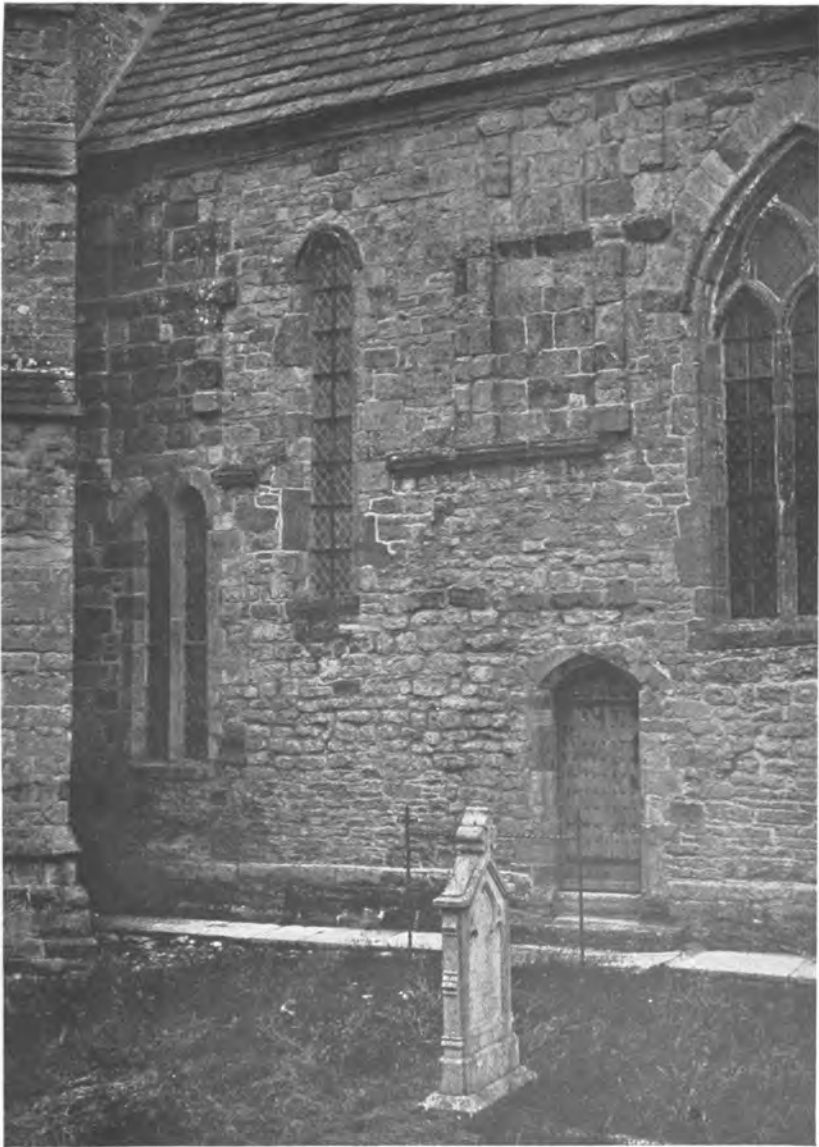
All the foregoing is very Saxon in its arrangement and general appearance, but I incline to the belief that it is post-Conquest work. This problem is complicated by the existence on the inside of the south wall of what appears to be the east jamb of a Norman window, with recessed shafts and carved capitals, the position of which does not coincide with the spacing of the pilasters outside, and yet the filling between the latter has no appearance of having been disturbed. (Time did not admit of my going into this fully by measurements.¹) The remains of a similar window, but with plain cushion caps, occur in the north wall of the chancel where it is cut into by the later arcade of the chapel.

The central tower has three stages of Norman work (Plate I); the lower in which the four arches occur; a plain intermediate stage against which the roofs abut (with square opening looking into the nave roof), and the original belfry stage of which one complete window and part of an adjoining one remain on the north side. Between the last two is a string-course of curious section which at first sight I took to have been inserted, but I noticed later that it occurs between two stages of Norman work in the turret. It has an early corbel head in it on the east face southwards of the nave roof. In the angle formed by the south wall of the tower and the west of the south transept is a most interesting stair turret (Plate III); up to the level of the eaves of nave and transept it is certainly Norman, above which is a stage which was probably rebuilt at a later period and is surmounted by the moulding which comes under the Norman belfry stage, which here forms the lower

1. This Norman work is between the Perpendicular and Early English windows, and exactly behind the undisturbed pilaster work. It therefore appears very probable that it is part of an internal arcade worked in the older wall.—E. H. BATES HARBIN.

course of the fine stone roof of nine courses of weathering, having a finial dying on the wall face. The Norman part (Plate IV) is divided into three stages and stands on a base of three square set-off courses; the lower two stages are flanked by round wall-shafts with bases resting on the top of these courses and terminate in a string-course of the same curious type as the one under the Norman belfry, which is carried round the shafts as the cap. These two stages are divided by a string-course semi-octagonal in section, three sides of it being enriched by the billet-mould. All this is octagonal on plan, but a remarkable feature is that in the middle stage of the Norman work the octagon is turned to bring its angles almost central with the sides of the first and third stages, so that it shows two whole sides and parts of two others, instead of three complete sides as in the other two. The set-off over the string at the angles is very clearly weathered to meet the problem afforded by the disposition of the plan. The Norman work is faced with stones 7ins. square set lozenge-wise, while the quoins are flattened on the bed forming an irregular hexagon (Plate IV). The middle stage is lighted by a circular light, and there are two slit openings 6ins. wide in a rebuilt part of the middle stage, and one in the top stage as well as a smaller circular one. The newel of the stair is 9ins. in diameter, and the steps 2ft. 6ins. wide for the full height. A piece of the Norman facing of the south transept is retained adjoining the turret.

The Norman work of the tower arches is unusually massive and good; the walls of the lower stage in which the arches occur are of great thickness, and the various orders are simple and of large dimension. The west arch of the tower, in a wall 5ft. 10ins. thick, has jambs of three orders of attached roll shafts with bases 2ft. 7ins. in height of two stages of cushion type, the upper having foot-moulds at the angles. All the five shafts have elaborately carved capitals with cable neck-mould but no abacus; the carving is of a foliated type, the stems



CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, MILBORNE PORT.

South Wall of the Chancel, showing the
Pilaster and Lintel treatment in two stages.

From a Photograph by Mr. H. St. George Gray

bordering on the pre-Norman interlaced work. The caps of the arch into the south transept appear to be restored in plaster. The arch is a pointed one of three orders of wave mould, the wall having been rebuilt from the springing upwards when this was inserted.

The east arch also has three orders of shafts on the inside, and two on the east side, but the lower order of cushion base here and in the north and south arches has been re-worked to a chamfered form. The arch is a 14th century insertion, like the west, the orders of moulding following those of the Norman roll-shafts; the caps have a square abacus and carving, together making the same depth as the carving of the west caps. On the north and south the Norman arches are retained and their elliptic form bears witness to the cause which necessitated the rebuilding of the others in the 14th century. Jambs and arches have three orders of roll-shafts inside and one square order in the transepts; the caps are somewhat similar to those on the west.

An old photograph of the nave, before rebuilding, in the possession of the vicar, shows the south door as it now exists, but it has at some time been much altered (Plate III). The only old parts are the lower part of the inner jambs with attached recessed shafts and cushion bases with foot ornament, which do not appear to have been disturbed, the carved caps and the inner order of roll-moulded semicircular arch which have been fixed at a higher level, with parts of the double billet-moulded abacus, and the tympanum. The doorway has been raised and the outer order of jambs and arch with weatherings over has been added at no very distant date, probably to afford additional shelter in the absence of a porch. Of the old carving, the west capital has foliage protruding from the mouth of a leopard; the east has a kind of a volute at the angle and on the west face the figure of a man with drawn sword in right hand in the act of attacking the winged beast on the south face. This cap, only, has a scroll.

The tympanum represents two beasts (which Mr. Keyser calls "lions"), one with the tip of its tail in its mouth and the other with a trefoiled shaft protruding from its mouth. These are surrounded by a band of scroll foliage following the line of the arch.

The Norman south transept (Plate III) was in 1842 refaced on the outside and much of its history obliterated, but its fine lofty proportions remain unaltered, and inside there is in the east wall a recessed Norman arch which now encloses a modern window. High up in the west wall is a window with coeval semicircular head, and jambs having recessed shafts with carved bases and plain caps; the inner arch is new. The trefoil inner arch with wide splays, enclosing the modern south window is probably of the 13th century, as also probably is the recessed tomb under it, in which lies the effigy of a woman. The roof of this transept is a very nice 14th century barrel vault rising from a good cornice, with carved pateræ and heraldic emblems and angel corbels bearing shields.

There is little other 13th century work remaining beyond two windows in the south wall of the chancel, viz:—A two-light pointed window (Plate II) in the western part of this wall which, from its position and low level, as well as from its inside rebate and hooks for shutter on its eastern jamb, may be regarded as a "low-side-window," although it has not the transom which is common in tall windows of this character. Eastward of this, and at the normal level, is a tall single lancet (also seen in Plate II), which, unlike the last, has an outside label worked on the head; this is probably about half-a-century later. The plain piscina on south of the sanctuary, formerly with shelf and doors, is 13th century work.

In the 14th century a good deal of work was carried out in the parts of the old Church which remain to us. The central tower had shewn signs of weakness, and it had become necessary to strengthen it, even before the top stage was added. On the south side a big diagonal buttress with base and plinth



**CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, MILBORNE PORT.
Door of Nave and Stair Turret on the S. side of the Church.**

From a Photograph by Mr. H. St. George Gray.

moulds was erected at the south-east angle ; it has three set-offs and the bases exist of one pinnacle on the lower and three on the upper. On the north side a weathered projection extending from the west wall of the transept to the north-west angle of the tower was constructed, and this points to the nave of that period being without a north aisle. In addition to this the east and west arches of the crossing were renewed and probably a good deal of the rebuilding of the Norman belfry on the east, south and west sides.

In the chancel the four-light Decorated east window and the three-light one on the south of the sanctuary were inserted in the old walls (which are of the same early character), both with a stilted form of reticulated tracery (without cusps), part of which has been cut away in the former window. The priest's door in the south wall with segment pointed arch is probably of the same period.

By the middle of the 15th century the upper stage had been added to the tower (Plate I). This is of low proportions and the face of the walls are set in from that of the Norman work sufficiently for diagonal buttresses of two stages with moulded plinth to be employed in the new work without projecting beyond the old, and in addition to the string-course carried all round between the two stages, there are four courses of steep weathering between the buttresses. The cornice is moulded and has gargoyle heads at the angles and the parapet is embattled. Above the buttresses are diagonal pinnacles with arcaded sides and crocketed finials, in which metal vanes have been fixed. On each face of this belfry is a two-light pointed window with transom and label, and conventional Perpendicular tracery ; the lights are filled with stone lattice with quatrefoil piercings. A square-headed contemporary window was inserted in the old belfry stage on the north side. Much of the surface of the tower has been cement-plastered on the west and south faces. Coeval with this work is the beautiful oak ceiling over the crossing above the lower stage ; it is

divided by moulded ribs with nine main panels, each of which is twice sub-divided into sixteen smaller panels. There are carved bosses at the intersections and the main ribs have wall braces on the north and south sides, supported by angel-corbels.

A nice oak screen of this period is now fixed under the east arch of the crossing, but it was obviously not made for its present position ; it doubtless came under a rood-loft at the west arch.

Northward of the sanctuary a 15th century sacristy is built against the Norman masonry of the chancel with a straight joint between the two. It has deep base mould and plinth, diagonal buttress at north-east angle, and plain parapet with modern pinnacle over the buttress. In the east wall are two small late Norman single-light windows (seen in Plate I) with a big roll-mould carried round, rising from moulded bases ; one has a round arch and the other a pointed. A modern copy of the former occurs in the north wall. A doorway with four-centred arch gives access from the sanctuary. (As I was unable to get inside, I cannot say anything about this part.)

Between this and the north transept is a late Perpendicular chapel¹ of two bays, following externally the lines of the sacristy as regards parapet and buttress with pinnacle, but it has too large four-light windows, under one of which is a depressed arch which may have given access to a crypt or vault. The arcade of two bays between this and the chancel has a central shaft of the typical West Country type of four rolls with hollows between and moulded caps and bases, the responds similar, and the pointed arches moulded to follow the same lines. The chapel has a lean-to roof of three bays with wall-shafts on outer wall between the windows ; the main timbers are mostly old. The north wall of the chapel is faced

1. The Chantryes Return of 1548 does not record an endowed chantry or altar in the Church ; but there was a Fraternity of St. John the Evangelist with lands and livestock. (*S.R.S.*, II, 141).



CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, MILBORNE PORT.
The three lower stages of the Stair Turret, of Norman date.

From a Photograph by Mr. H. St. George Gray.

with ashlar, inside and out, and much renewal and scraping of all the stonework seems to have taken place. A small arch opened into the transept, but it is now concealed by the organ.¹

A 14th century stoup occurs in the south wall of the nave eastward of the door. The Norman font (1066-1100) had originally a square bowl of Purbeck marble with arcaded sides; the angles have been roughly cut off, to make it octagonal.² The cover is of late 17th century character, with scrolls.

The old photograph previously mentioned shows a five-light pointed west window of the nave, with two transoms, all lights without cusps. Under it a square-headed doorway with carved pateræ, flanked by two niches—the latter have been renewed, but the fragments are preserved inserted in a building in the churchyard. The photograph shows the Norman walling and a roof of flat pitch (as indicated by the weather-mould remaining on west face of the tower, under the present roof) with plain parapet and pinnacles.

Village Cross.—At the cross-roads are the remains of the cross, of noble proportions. On a deep bench-table, circular on plan and 10ft. 6ins. in diameter, stands the base of the cross, 3ft. square, which has stops at the angle of 15th century character. The mortice for the stem is obliterated. The usual steps on the bench-table are absent.

In a House near on the south of the road leading to the church is a Norman doorway with segmental arch with label,—zig-zag ornament on jambs and arch. The whole appears to be original except the tympanum.

1. On the wall of the chapel is a frame containing the arms of Charles II; and some old books provided for the Church are exhibited in a case.

2. Buckler's drawing, dated 1839, in the Pigott collection at Taunton Castle, shows a square bowl.

The Market House is an interesting structure of about 1700. It is of two stories in height, and of three bays, divided by pilasters, the full height having triglyphs in the frieze. There are three arches on each side and one at each end in the lower, and windows in the upper storey over the side arches. On the east gable is a bell turret, and on the west an arcaded chimney for the fire-place in the upper room. The lower storey is not now open, for the arches have been blocked up and partly glazed.