

## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS AT STOWTING.

BY N. E. TOKE.

THE little church of St. Mary at Stowting has apparently escaped the notice of the Kent Archæological Society, for no mention of it occurs in the volumes of *Archæologia Cantiana*, though they contain a few cursory references to the parish and manor. This neglect may be due to the position of the church, which lies in a hollow of the downs on an unfrequented road about a mile and a half to the east of Brabourne whose church has been visited twice (in 1874 and 1933) by the members of the K.A.S.

Considering the proximity of the two villages, it is a pity that Stowting was not included in the programme on either occasion, for its church, though unable to compete in interest with that of Brabourne, contains two mediæval stained glass windows which are well worth inspection.

The oldest of these (Fig. 1) is situated in the vestry, and consists of a small rectangular panel, 22 by 9½ inches, containing the figures of the Blessed Virgin and Child set in lozenge-shaped quarries of *grisaille*. On each of the quarries is painted a four-lobed ornament in black. They are not all of the same date, many of them having evidently been broken and replaced at some time by imitations. Dr. Grayling in his *Churches of Kent* assigns these quarries to the thirteenth century, but I venture to think that this is too early a date, and that, like the central panel, they belong to the century after.

This central panel is beautifully executed. The Blessed Virgin, wearing a crown of gold and dressed in a long mantle of dark green over an under-garment of yellow with a white frontlet and yellow sleeves, is holding aloft in her left hand the Divine Child around whose head is a golden nimbus. Except in the faces, there is very little painting in the figures,



Fig. 1.

STOWTING CHURCH.  
(Vestry.)

the graceful flowing lines of the garments being indicated by the leads. The face of the Virgin has a particularly sweet and gentle expression, although the iris of the eye is not distinguished from the pupil and the mouth consists merely of three curved dashes side by side. These characteristics, says Mr. F. S. Eden, are typical of early Decorated work, and he gives in his excellent little manual, *Ancient Stained and Painted Glass*, an illustration from Kingsdown Church of a head of Our Lady which shows these features, and which resembles so closely that at Stowting that I have no hesitation in assigning to the latter the same date as that of the Kingsdown glass, viz., the first half of the fourteenth century.

The figures of the Virgin and Child are set in a background of dark ruby glass with a narrow border formed of small pieces of deep yellow, the general effect being extremely pleasing and artistic. If my memory does not play me false, I was told, many years ago, by the Rev. W. A. Newman, Rector of Upper Hardres, that this beautiful little panel came originally from Stelling Church. Some colour is given to this statement by the fact that it is not mentioned by the Rev. Philip Parsons in his account,<sup>1</sup> at the end of the eighteenth century, of the stained glass in Stowting Church, though he described at some length that in the south window. The Church at Stelling no longer possesses the splendid glass<sup>2</sup> for which Parsons expressed great admiration, and of which he remarks: "the upper most [portion] contains an exquisite representation of the Virgin and Child: there is a divine sweetness in the features of the infant which is enchanting: the figure of the Virgin is pleasing but not quite perfect." Had it not been for the last sentence, I should have felt justified in believing that he was referring to the panel now at Stowting. But, as this shows no signs of imperfection or of repair, it is doubtful whether it is the one described by Parsons.

<sup>1</sup> *The Monuments and Painted Glass of Upwards of one Hundred Churches* (1794).

<sup>2</sup> In his account of the Church of Upper Hardres, Parsons says: "I have been lately told that the windows over the altar were greatly composed of the glass from Stelling."

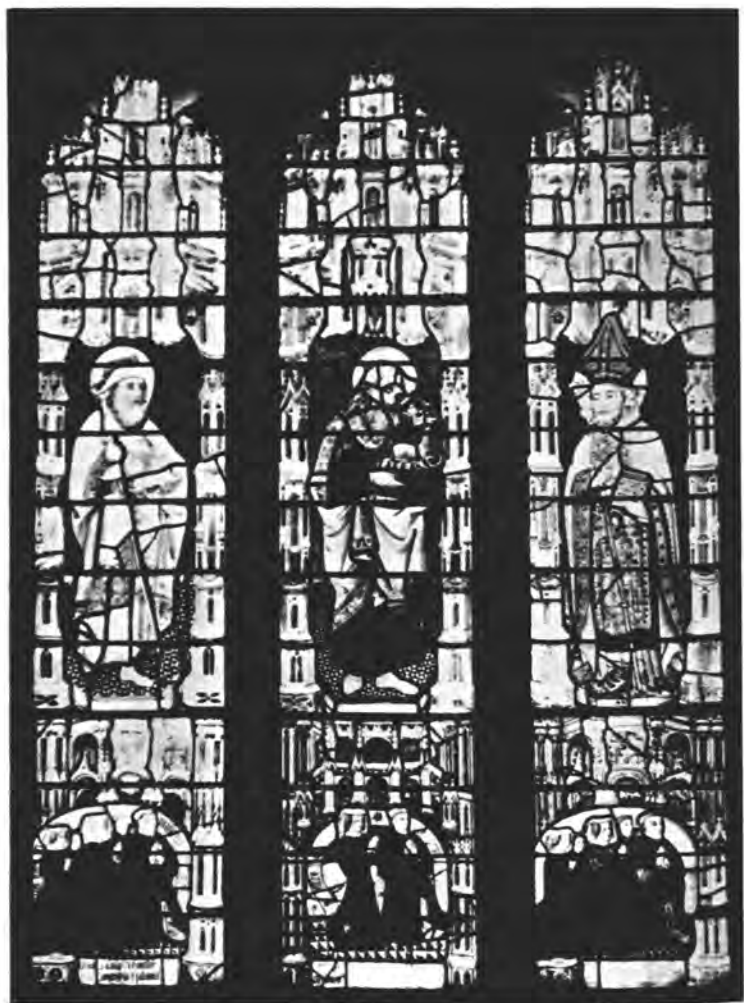


Fig. 2.

STOWTING CHURCH.  
(S. Aisle.)

The second window (Fig. 2), is a large one in the south aisle. It consists of three lights, each of which contains the figure of a nimbed saint beneath a canopy together with the small kneeling figures of the donor, or his family, at the base, and an inscription running across the whole. Hasted in his *History of Kent* (ed. 1790, Vol. III, pp. 313-15) says, "In the window of the *north* isle is this legend on the glass. *Orate p aibs Rycardy Stotync & Juliane ux : ejus :* and *three figures* of antient men with beards, their staves in their hands : and underneath *six smaller figures* in a praying posture, 2, 2 and 2. In the upper part of the window is a canopy, very finely painted." In this statement Hasted refers to the original north aisle which was rebuilt in 1860, when this glass was transferred to its present position.

Judging by the figures at the base of the lights, the glass belongs to the middle portion of the fifteenth century. It is somewhat flat in colour, the prevailing tints being yellow, brownish-red, and white, relieved only by a few pieces of deep blue, or red, in the canopies, and by the red costumes of the little kneeling figures.

The Saint (Fig. 3) depicted in the easternmost light evidently represents St. James the Greater, the patron saint of Spain, usually known as St. James of Compostella, where his relics are preserved in a celebrated shrine. He holds in his right hand a long staff with a hook to which is suspended a pilgrim's bottle, and in the left hand an open book. He wears a slouched hat with a broad brim turned up in front, in the centre of which can be seen a cockle-shell flanked on the one side by a sign composed of three roundels on a triangle, and on the other by a crudely-executed head of a man wearing a pointed cap, or mitre. The cockle-shell is the well-known symbol of St. James, but the other two signs are puzzling.

The Saint wears a brown mantle with orphreys of gold and white, and stands on a black and white tessellated pavement. The large canopy above his head is of white and gold into which a few small shafts of deep blue are inserted with good effect. The patterned glass behind his head and nimbus is reddish in colour.

Beneath the Saint are the small kneeling figures of the three sons and two daughters of the donor, all wearing red costumes. The boys are bare-headed with close cropped hair; the girls wear kerchiefs thrown over broad reticulated side cauls. In a semi-circle above them is a mutilated inscription in black letter :

*Etu tibi et --- miserere nobis.*

And beneath :

*Orate p̄ aīb̄s Bp̄cardy  
Stoīgn̄c & Juliane.*

The centre light contains the figure of St. John the Baptist, holding in his hands a closed book on which stands a Paschal Lamb with a banner. The Saint is bare-headed with long golden hair and curly beard. He wears a dark brown cloak with golden orphreys. The head and face seem to have been damaged and repaired, judging by the number of leads which cross them. The canopy over his head is white and gold like that over St. James, but has some red shafts inserted instead of blue. The background to the head is purplish with yellow ornaments. Like the others, this Saint is standing on a tessellated pavement.

Underneath are the kneeling figures of the donor and his wife dressed, like their children, in red robes, and similarly attired. A fragmentary inscription round them bears the words :

*S. Joh̄es la --- ra pro n ---*

which may be meant for *Sancte Johannes laudate ora pro nobis*. Beneath are the words :

*ac  
ux : eius*

The westernmost figure (Fig. 4) is probably meant for St. Augustine, the missionary to the Saxons and the first Archbishop of Canterbury. He wears a golden mitre studded with white jewels, and holds in his left hand a closed book indicating that he was the bearer of the Gospel to the heathen, and in the right a pastoral staff with two cross-pieces. A staff of this kind is termed "patriarchal" and is the attribute of an Archbishop.



Fig. 3.  
St. James.



Fig. 4.  
St. Augustine.

STOWING CHURCH.  
(S. Aisle.)

The Saint wears a white cope, fastened in front by a large morse, or clasp, set with jewels, and ornamented with golden orphreys jewelled like the morse. The vestment beneath is yellow with fringed edges and is ornamented with fleur de lys, a small portion of the bottom of the garment being red. His head is brown, and he has long curly hair and beard. The glass behind the head is reddish in colour, and the canopy above it has insertions of blue, like that above the figure of St. James.

Beneath the figures are the small kneeling figures of the sons and daughters of the donor which are precisely similar in every way to those represented in the eastern light.

All that remains of the inscription above their heads is the letters *SAA*—, i.e. *Sancte*—.

It is obvious from the size and elaborate execution of the window that it must have cost a large sum of money, and could only have been erected by a man of considerable wealth. This being the case, it is curious that no record exists of Richard Stotync or of his family. The manor of Stowting, says Hasted, was held originally of the Archbishop by the family of Heringod, one of whom, Stephen de Heringod, in the beginning of the reign of King Henry III had a grant of a market to be held weekly on a Tuesday, and a fair yearly for two days. The manor subsequently passed into the hands of William de Kirby who married Christiana Heringod, and who died seized of it, 30 Edward I. It then passed in succession into the families of Burghersh, de Paveley, and de Valence, and then to Sir Thomas Trivet, whose widow, Elizabeth, died seized of it, 12 Henry VI. It was then acquired by Lord Burgavenny who died seized of it, 19 Edward IV, and his son sold it to Sir Thomas Kempe whose descendants held it till 1622.

From this statement of Hasted's it is clear that the family of Stotync never held the manor, which seems to have been in the possession of Lord Burgavenny at the time when the window was made. If there were another estate of importance in the parish, it is odd that no record of its owner should have come down to us, and that the only



mention of the well-to-do Richard Stowting should lie in a mutilated inscription in a window of this remote Kentish village.

NOTE.—My thanks are due to the Rev. A. S. Hamilton Dicker, Rector of Stowting, for information about the original position of the three-light window, and also for calling my attention to the list of “The Gentils of Kent, Anno Regni Regis, H. vii.” (British Museum, Cottonian MSS. Faustina, E.ii), in which occurs the name of Sir Nicholas Stoulinge who bore “*g. a saulter between 4 lionceaux ar.*” This name is very probably “Stoutinge,” and the knight may have been the son of the Richard Stotync commemorated in the window. N.E.T.