

RINGWOULD CHURCH.

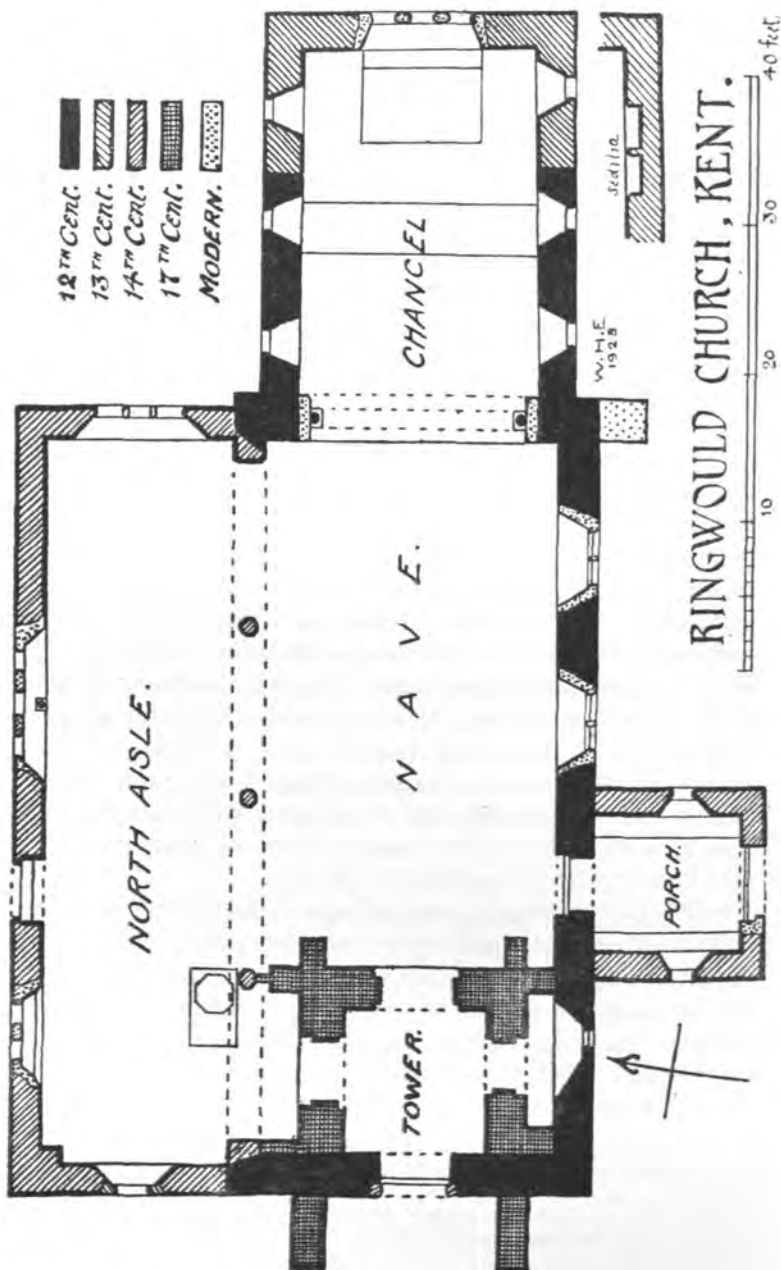
A REPORT IN MARCH, 1925, BY PROFESSOR F. C. EYLES.

RINGWOULD is spelled Ridlingswould by Philipott, and Ridlingweald by Hasted. Its church consists of chancel, nave, north aisle, south porch, and tower engaged within the west end of the nave.

The west and south walls of the nave appear to belong to a church built in early Norman days, although the south wall has been refaced in modern times and its character altered by the insertion of two new windows east of the porch, while the west wall has been somewhat obscured by the way in which the tower was incorporated with the rest of the building. The west window below the tower and that in the south wall of the nave west of the porch, belong to this period. They are small plain round-headed single lights characteristic of the transition between Norman and Gothic in its simpler forms. The plain rounded-headed south doorway, entirely without mouldings and ornament of any kind, is also of this date, and so is the lower part of the south-west corner of the church, which shows the same quoins, or corner stones, usually met with in work of this period.

The fabric of the chancel belongs to the twelfth century, and was probably prolonged eastward in the thirteenth. Of the six single light pointed windows in the side walls, the two eastmost on each side are wide in proportion to their height. The stone-work of the easternmost and westernmost on the north side is the original; that of those on the south, like the central window in the north¹, has been in the main

¹ This window was stopped up for many years by the erection of a marble tablet to the Rev. John Monins, rector, died 1853. About 1925 this tablet was removed to the S. wall of the Nave and the light reopened, but unhappily the original stonework, after this blocking ordeal, required complete renewal.—V.J.T.





RINGWOULD CHURCH.

Interior before "restoration," from a water-colour drawing made, probably, between 1853 and 1863, and belonging to Capt. John E. Monins.

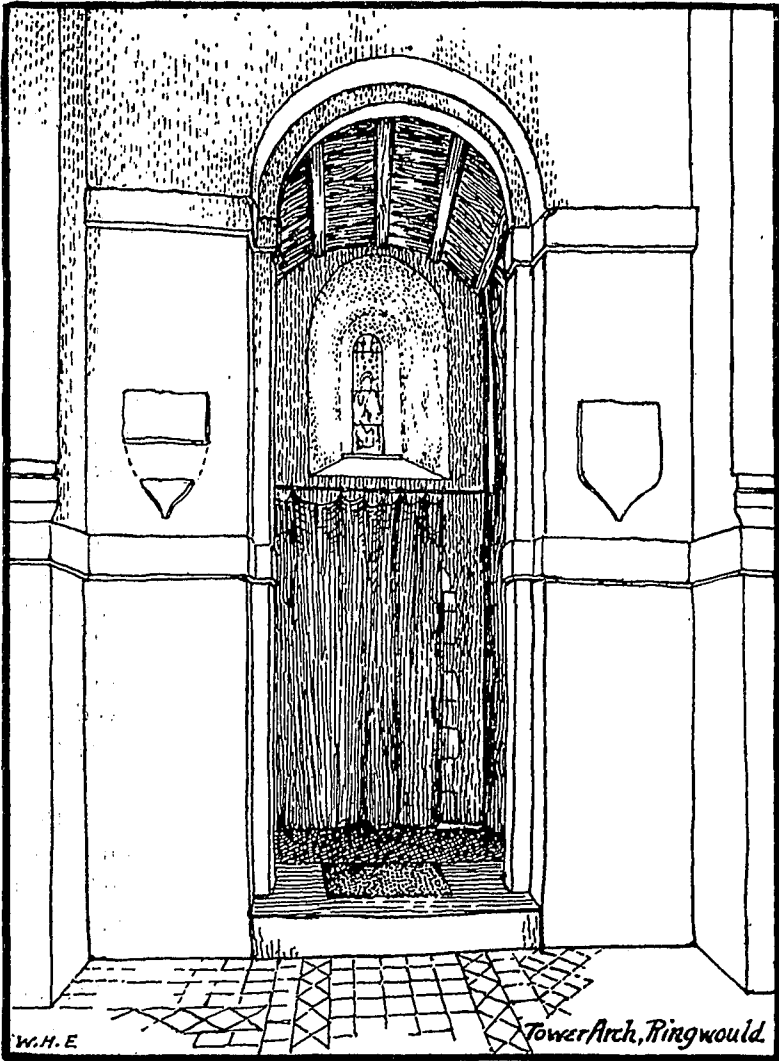
renewed. The trefoil-headed windows in the western part of each wall are insertions of the end of the thirteenth century. The east window is a conjectural restoration in thirteenth century style, carried out in the nineteenth century, and takes the place of a window, which the nineteenth century restorers disapproved. The two sedilia are of the thirteenth century, but much restored.

Early in the fourteenth century the north aisle was added. The pillars and arches of the arcade of four bays are of this date, while the plain blocked doorway may be thirteenth century work reused, moved from the old north wall of the nave. The pillars are octagonal and small in size, the mouldings of the capitals being somewhat crude. The arches are of two recessed orders, chamfered, the chamfer of the outer order being stopped off on to the square immediately above the capitals. The stone is Kentish rag. The mouldings of the middle capital are a little richer than those of the others, and the mouldings of the responds, of square section, at each end, are also different. To this date belongs the opening of the east window of this aisle, of which the tracery is modern, though it is very likely a copy of the original. Each light has a trefoiled head, supporting a complete trefoil, and the three remaining tracery lights are also trefoil-headed. The west window of this aisle is a wide thirteenth century lancet, set high in the wall, and probably re-used from the north side of the old nave. The stone work of the outer part has been renewed. The roof of this aisle is ancient, and appears to belong to the fifteenth century, judging by the embattled wall plate. It is of the usual steep-pitched Gothic type in Kent, with tie-beams and plain king posts. The south porch, with short trefoil-headed windows on either side, appears to belong to the fourteenth century, though it has few definite characteristics, apart from its windows. The outer doorway is modern.

Until early in the seventeenth century the church had a small wooden bell turret supporting a spirelet covered with lead. This was partly built on the west gable of the nave, but was mainly supported on a wooden framework built up

within the church.¹ Early in the seventeenth century this wooden spire fell into disrepair, and its place was taken by the present tower, which was built of flint with brick dressings in almost exactly the same position. The east, north and south walls of the tower with double buttresses at the corners are wholly built within the west end of the nave. The west wall of the tower is built upon, and incorporates, the west wall of the nave. The north and south extremities of the old west wall form the base of the north and south buttresses of the tower, and the western buttresses are built up outside the west wall of the nave. The tower rises into two stages above the roof of the church. All the dressings are of brick, including the belfry windows, which are of classical form with moulded pediments. The corners of the upper part of the tower, and the parapet, are wholly of brick. The parapet appears not to be in its original condition, but has a straight top finished in cement. At the south-east corner there is a projection above the level of the parapet resembling the familiar Kentish feature of the stair-case turret, although it does not actually contain the stairs, access to the roof being obtained through it by means of a ladder set on the bell frame. The top of this turret is crowned by an ogee-shaped spirelet of lead with a wrought iron base for the weather vane. The whole of the tower is extraordinarily picturesque, and forms a fine example of a tower of essentially Kentish late-Gothic type, carried out with Renaissance detail. It is of special interest because we happen to possess a contemporary account of its erection, in the form of an appeal, dated 1628, to the Archdeacon for permission to substitute it for the wooden structure formerly existing. A simple round-headed arch leads into the church and another like a large doorway, leads into the north aisle. Another on the south side of the tower gives access to a staircase partly in the narrow space between the tower and the south wall of the church, partly overlapping the south nave wall itself, where

¹ Similar examples are common in the South of England, especially in Surrey and Essex. It would be easy to mention cases such as Crowhurst in Surrey where the bell turret and spire are small, or Mountnessing in Essex where they are of larger size.



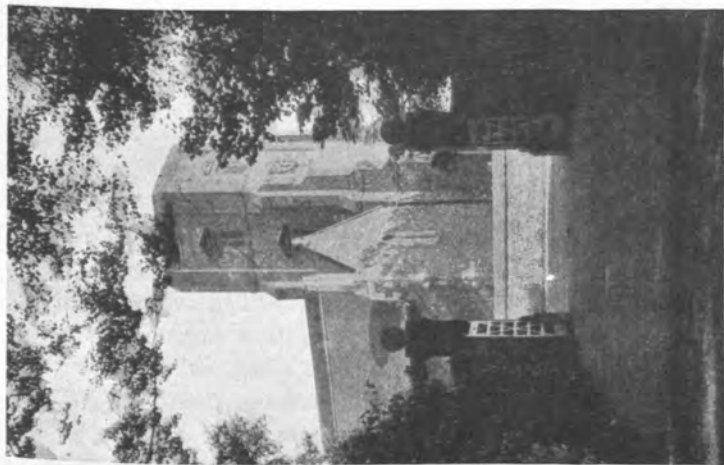
the splay of the twelfth century window has been cut away to receive it. This staircase gives access to the second stage of the tower from which a ladder leads to a bell chamber.

The church underwent drastic "restoration" in the nineteenth century. None of the old fittings survive, save a painting of the Royal arms of George IV., two benefaction boards and an old chest of the seventeenth century. The font is modern, as are also the roofs of the nave and chancel. There is a modern chancel arch, and modern windows have been inserted in the north wall of the north aisle, and in the south wall of the nave east of the porch, superseding those shown in Petrie's drawing. The chancel floor has been raised, thus stultifying the position of the sedilia; the pulpit, reredos, choir stalls and seating are all modern. With the exception of the north wall of the chancel and the west wall of the nave, the east and west walls of the porch and the south-west corner of the nave all the external wall surfaces were refaced with flints of the nineteenth century.

Recently the organ has been moved into the north aisle, a wooden door in a suitable frame with a window above it filled with plain Dutch glass of the eighteenth century, has been inserted in the tower arch to keep away draughts. A simple wooden lych-gate has been erected on the west side of the churchyard, and the churchyard paths paved with brick. All these improvements are due to the generosity of Sir Bignell Elliott.

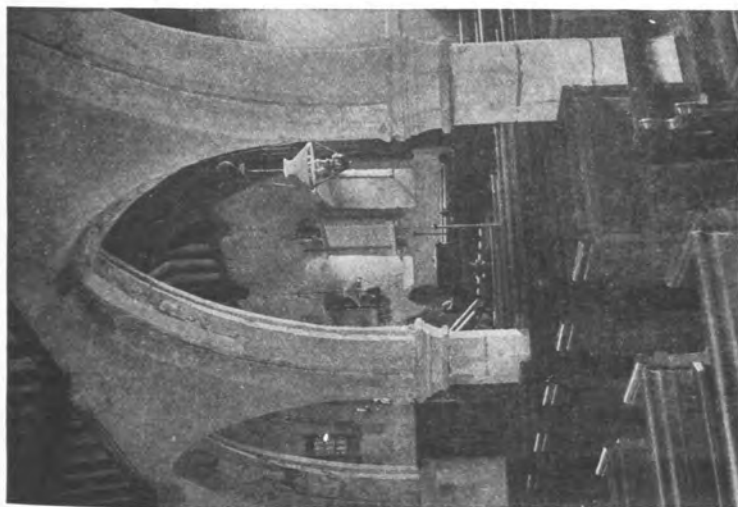
Ringwould does not occur in Cozens' Tour. It is mentioned in Parson's scarce work, but the then rector, Mr. Geo. Gipps, who communicated to Mr. Parsons on Sep. 21, 1790, the monuments in the church, has not mentioned any of the brasses.

[Mr. Gipps' burial place is marked by a stone beneath the arch from the tower into the nave, stating that he died at the age of forty-one, on March 2nd, 1802; and there is a tablet to his memory on the nave wall east of the south door. There is one late inscription in English, in the floor of the nave, to Captain John Jeken, of Oxney, gentleman, his wife Susanna and three of his children. He died in 1720.—V.J.T.]



[Photo. : Edward Mills

Exterior from the north-west.



Interior from the north-west corner of the building.

RINGWOULD CHURCH.

The following note on the brasses has been kindly contributed by Mr. Ralph Griffin, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London :

The monumental brasses which existed in slabs on the floor at the restoration were dragged out of them and fixed in the plaster of the wall "out of harm's way." The slabs appear to have been destroyed. The brasses have been fixed in a rather haphazard way, so that it is difficult to tell from the inspection of them as they are now how many and what they were. But luckily old rubbings exist in the collection of the Society of Antiquaries, which make it possible to sort out the mixed fragments, that now remain of three separate memorials.

The most interesting is the little effigy and inscription for John Upton, 1530. This is complete and unharmed, and furnishes a good example of a brass from a local workshop, probably at Canterbury. Such specimens of local Kentish workmanship are not common.

Next is a mutilated inscription for Elizabeth Gaunt, 1580, which can be restored from the account given by Hasted in his notes on the church.

The third was once a brass with effigies of a man, Wm. Abere, 1505, and his two wives, Alys and Amis. There was a scroll above, running from the man's mouth. Below was the inscription and below that probably two groups of children. Of all this only the upper portion of the wife on the man's right ; the scroll ; the inscription ; and one group of children, two sons and three daughters with long hair remain. Glynne notes that at his visit he found the man's figure also "in good preservation."

There is in the same collection a rubbing made in 1862 of a brass now entirely lost. It is noted by Hasted "In the north isle an antient gravestone coffin shaped on which is a cross patonce on a greece of three steps." The cross by 1862 had got much mutilated and the steps had vanished. The rubbing is endorsed "March 21, 1862. On a mutilated coped coffin slab in N.A."

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES BY V. J. B. TORR.

Ringwould church was originally of similar form to many other early buildings in the district, an aisleless nave, probably without any south porch and without any tower (as Professor Eeles has indicated), and a chancel probably somewhat shorter than at present, the whole of moderately early Norman date, perhaps *circa* 1100. [Tilmanstone church is of about the same dimensions and date, as the original Ringwould and with similar early windows deeply splayed.] Whereas from a cursory inspection of the exterior of the chancel it might be concluded that it had been completely re-built in the thirteenth century, this is not so; on the irrefutable evidence of the rear-arches of the centre window on either side, it is safe to say that at least most of the Norman chancel remains, even if disguised without. The only point of doubt is as to whether we have the original length left, or whether a slight extension was made in the thirteenth century. Personally I favour the latter suggestion, which very commonly took place (the practised eye may sometimes detect the external "seam" between the two works; but here refacing and bad re-pointing have deprived us of direct evidence), and I conjecture that the Norman east wall probably ran across about three feet to the east of the present central pair of lights. This would give a length of about twenty feet, which will be found borne out by many other examples of small country chancels, and would give about the same wall space between window and east wall as at present seen in the case of the successor of each.

The south window of the nave, now lighting the tower stairs, is as Norman as anything else in the church essentially, but the external head has been altered (perhaps about 1200) into lancet form. The reason is not apparent, unless the desire for new ways, but it is not very rare to notice similar examples of conversion. (Cf. the altered arch in the internal Ernulf wall arcade at Canterbury.)

But little has hitherto appeared in print about this church, and that as a whole is not remarkable for accuracy.

Oyler (p. 112) speaks of the tower as a "disfigurement of the edifice," whereas in truth the general effect of the church before this addition of the seventeenth century must have been distinctly less imposing. Moreover, the tower is a valuable specimen of its period, and definitely more Gothic in general outline than the other interesting tower of Upper Deal, close at hand, which is over fifty years later in date (1684).

Grayling (ii. 74), who seems to have copied from Glynne's pre-restoration account, makes no mention whatever of any Norman work existing, and generally leads one to doubt whether he ever paid a personal visit. He mentions fifteenth century windows which do not appear, and attributes the modern chancel arch to the thirteenth! This has supplanted the original, destroyed at the restoration, which had the simplest work of perhaps about 1190, a wide, perfectly plain pointed arch of one order upon impost caps projecting from the plain responds. This arch had probably in its turn superseded a much narrower, earlier Norman one.

Glynne's notes (p. 99), made some time before 1840, are fuller and of more value, but he, too, maligns the tower and omits mention of the Norman features. Glynne describes the chancel arch which he saw as "seemingly Early English," and his description agrees with the arch seen in the illustration reproduced from an old water colour drawing belonging to Captain Monins of Ringwould. This picture represents the interior before the restoration and shows the usual high pews and "three decker," without sounding board and seemingly of Georgian date.¹ The drawing has preserved several other features of interest: the customary Decalogue tablets flanked the east window; the chancel had a wainscot all round, which partly obscured the sedilia; the chancel floor was then on one level (a step above the nave) instead of, as now, on three—a common fault of Victorian "restorers," which has made the sedilia too low in the wall and has

¹ There are few three decker pulpits now left in Kent, but I have found them at Stelling, Badlesmere, Brookland and Old Romney. Knowlton (a church very little visited) has the most interesting one of all, of *Jacobean* date.

occasioned the introduction of ugly wooden bottoms to remedy matters ; and the handsome—Laudian or later—communion rails, ousted at the restoration ordeal by modern commonplace successors.

Glynne also notes that most of the windows of the nave and north aisle were in his day “late Perpendicular” ; and that a west gallery was then existing.

Comment must be made upon the vicissitudes of the east window, seen in this picture which, from circumstantial evidence, would seem to have been painted some time about 1860. It is before the insertion of the present east window (1863), yet after the closing of the north lancet by the tablet of 1853.

The first east window was probably a normal light or lights, doubtless later superseded by thirteenth century lancets. Whether the immediate successor of these was that shown in the Petrie drawing of 1807 (here reproduced), we have no means of knowing ; this was of debased character, but it is difficult to tell from the picture whether it was a stone transomed domestic-like window of Elizabethan insertion, or a wooden framed affair of the eighteenth century. At all events, an early instance of “restoration” took place at Ringwould, for in the Monins drawing an entirely different window appears, square-headed and of two cinque-foiled lights. When I first noticed the discrepancy between the two pictures I concluded that an early piece of restoration must have been attempted, an assumption which I find to be correct from Glynne’s corroboration, who, writing before 1840, says, “The east window is Perpendicular *lately restored.*” The final version is that which we see to-day, an unmistakable Victorian triplet in the Early English manner.

Petrie’s view of 1807 shows the interesting feature of a chancel roof higher than that of the nave—another piece of evidence removed at the ordeal ; though Dr. Hardman points out that the modern roof has only masked over the disparity, which still exists.

Petrie’s drawing also shows an additional turret at the N.E. corner of the tower (since removed), the two southern



Drawn by H. Petrie, F.S.A., in 1807



After "restoration."

RINGWOULD CHURCH, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

lancets of the chancel apparently blocked up, and a long, narrow, square-headed opening in the south wall of the nave, near the junction with the chancel. If he depicted this accurately, it was probably a late mediæval insertion to throw greater light on the Rood at the chancel arch.

The angle quoins of the chancel are of eighteenth century red brick, of which period is also a long horizontal band of the same material running under the east window, analogous to similar (but more extensive) work in the chancel of Ham, near Sandwich. The lower part of this east wall was probably not rebuilt at the restoration.

A modern buttress at the S.E. corner of the nave has obliterated most of the nave angle quoins, and the few that appear above it have been renewed ; but a rather uncommon feature may be observed in this angle, a quoining of hard, brown limestone in the chancel wall, immediately abutting on the angle and extending about three-quarters of the distance up from the ground. This is again rather corroborative of the Norman date of the chancel. At the corresponding angle on the north a modern brick flue over a sloping-roofed outhouse masks, and has possibly destroyed, any similar quoins of either nave or chancel.

Internally, the second stone from the bottom of the western respond of the sedilia is re-used, probably originally belonging to some point on the southern exterior of the Norman church ; it bears a scratch mass-dial.

The west doorway of the nave (now in the tower) is of the thirteenth century. The fourteenth century arcade from the nave to the north aisle is very pleasing but suffers badly in effect from the pewing all round the pillars ; chairs, such as may be seen in some of the more recently restored churches in Kent (e.g., Wittersham and Newchurch), would display the rather stumpy columns to greater advantage. The responds are of an interesting character for the period, reminiscent of the highly unusual early fourteenth century arcade at Stalisfield. The spring of the easternmost arch, for about three feet, above the capital of the respond, has been repaired in cement ; in the absence of evidence of a gallery

formerly standing there (Glynne mentions a west gallery only), one may conjecture that the arch-spring may have been cut away in later mediæval times to allow of part of the rood-screen being inserted there. The Monins drawing does not, unfortunately, extend far enough for one to see the condition of this arch prior to the restoration.

The tower contains five bells, unfortunately recast in 1887. Of the old peal of five, four were cast in 1638, and the third, of the later fourteenth century, bore the inscription:—

IOHANNES EST NOMEN EIVS.

Curfew is still rung at Ringwould during the winter, in common with Canterbury, Sandwich and other places.

The Registers are Elizabethan, starting in 1569.

Particulars of the altar plate may be found in *Arch. Cant.*, XXVIII., 128 seq., with an illustration of the alms dish (1669), Paten, (1710), two cups (1795), chalice and flagon (1846).

Apart from the brasses, the memorials in the church are not of much interest or antiquity; the oldest is that over the sedilia, a marble and alabaster tablet to Richard Dauling, rector, died 1679, and his two wives and nine sons, the first wife a Toke, of Godinton in Great Chart, the second a Tylden, of Milsted.

Note.—Thanks are hereby given to Captain John E. Monins for courteously allowing the water-colour drawing in his possession to be reproduced; to Sir Bignell Elliott, Dr. Hardman, Mr. Edward Mills and to the Kent County Photographic Record and Survey for kindly supplying photographs, to the Rev. R. U. Potts, F.S.A., and Gordon Cuming for assistance in various ways; to Mr. V. J. Torr for supplying some supplementary notes, valuable as the result of independent investigation; and especially to Mr. W. H. Elgar for his trouble and generosity in making a plan of Ringwould Church, as well as his excellent drawing of the west tower arch, a feature which, obscured as it now is with modern excrescences, could not adequately be shown by a photograph.—ED.