

SHERBORNE MINSTER, Dorsetshire,  
General view from the South-West. From a Drawing by the Rev. John Louis Petit, F.S.A.

# The Archaeological Journal.

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SEPTEMBER, 1865.

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## SHERBORNE MINSTER.

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THE church or minster of Sherborne, as it now stands, exhibits in its fabric clear evidence to show that it is essentially a Norman church entirely transformed—so far as the nave and presbytery are concerned, into the Perpendicular style; the transepts, tower, and other appendages still retain Norman characteristics with Early English insertions and additions, especially a portion of a fine Lady Chapel at the east end. The Perpendicular work is of an unusually grand and beautiful character, and has the advantage of being accurately dated. At the west end of this minster are fragments, which clearly show that the nave was prolonged in the fourteenth century by a building resembling a parish church, with three aisles, the plan of which can be pretty accurately traced. This is known as the church or chapel of Alhalowes.

The minster was that of a Benedictine Abbey; but we have no records of its first construction, and the remains of the monastic buildings are too scanty to attract more than a passing mention in the present memoir. The site of them is appropriated to the King's School, the buildings of which have been lately rearranged and constructed without reference to the plan of the monastery, although admirably adapted to their proper purposes.

At the meeting of the Institute at Oxford, in 1850, a memoir of Sherborne Minster was read by the Rev. J. L.

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Archæological Institute, at their annual meeting, held at Dorchester, August 2, 1865.

Petit, which was afterwards printed in the Bristol volume, with abundant illustrations from the pencil of the author.<sup>2</sup> These sketches were made soon after the commencement of the restoration, which gives them an additional value, for they not only preserve one or two curious particulars, which have been unavoidably obliterated by that work,<sup>3</sup> but they also serve as evidence of the admirable manner in which the restorations have been carried out. The author has confined himself to the description and analogy of the architectural characters of the building, and more especially to the forms and arrangement of the vaulting, which he has worked out so completely and ingeniously, as to have exhausted that portion of the subject.

In the present memoir, I propose, in the first place, to describe the Minster as it stands, and the probable plan of the Church of Alhalowes; and in the next place, to attempt the elucidation of the history of the latter church, and the remarkable quarrel between the monks and the parish, to which it gave rise, and which ended in a conflagration of the Minster in 1437, that destroyed the choir and central tower, but spared the nave, and was thus the cause of the building of the present magnificent structure.

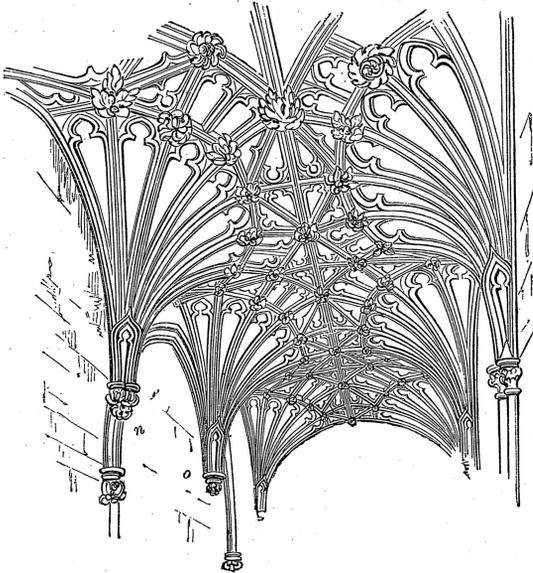
In the plan at the end of this memoir, the distribution of styles is indicated by various hatchings, as explained in the table in its margin. A, B, is the Early English Lady chapel, of which the portion B, in a darker tint than A, exists, and forms part of the building which was until lately the school-master's house, but at present has no assigned destination. This house includes also the chapel of our Lady of Bow, on the south, marked c. This chapel, built by Abbot Ramesunne,<sup>4</sup> opened to the south aisle of the choir by a lofty arch, now closed by a lath and plaster partition, at the lower part of which may be seen the remains of a stone panelled screen. The north end of the house, at d, does not appear to have been the site of any chapel at the time of the Reformation, as none is mentioned in the deeds of sale of the church to the parishioners. The dotted line, at B, is the east boundary of the house, and the destroyed portion of the Lady chapel, at A,

<sup>2</sup> Vide also *Archæological Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Vide note appended to the "view from south transept" at the end of this memoir.

<sup>4</sup> "Ramesunne Abbate sette a chapelle caullid our Lady of Bow, hard to the south side of the Old Lady chapelle."—*Leland. Itin.*, vol. ii. f. 49.

outside of that boundary, is laid down from a plan of the foundations uncovered by Mr. Slater, to whom I am indebted for it. One compartment of rich Early English vaulting covers the part B, included in the house. The lateral walls of this compartment are arranged in a manner that appears to indicate that, in the complete state of the east end, there were small lateral chapels on the sites of c and d. The opening of the Lady chapel to the church was by a fine Early English arch, which still exists in the wall, but its centre is a little south of that of the Perpendicular choir, and consequently the corbels at *n* and *o*, which receive the fan vaults of the eastern aisle, are placed out of symmetry; *o*, which falls against the opening, is constructed so as to remain as a pendant hanging freely down.



Vault of Eastern Aisle behind the Reredos.

This is shown in Mr. Petit's woodcut above,<sup>5</sup> which represents the fan vault of this eastern aisle looking south. The walled-up arch of the Lady chapel is indicated by the outer molding, which stands free of the wall. The corbel, *n*, of the fan vault is engrafted upon this Early English molding,

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Petit's kindness for the use of this woodcut, and also of five others enumerated in the List of Illustrations at the end of this memoir, p. 115.

and the corbel, *o*, hangs down, and when the arch was open was a free pendant.

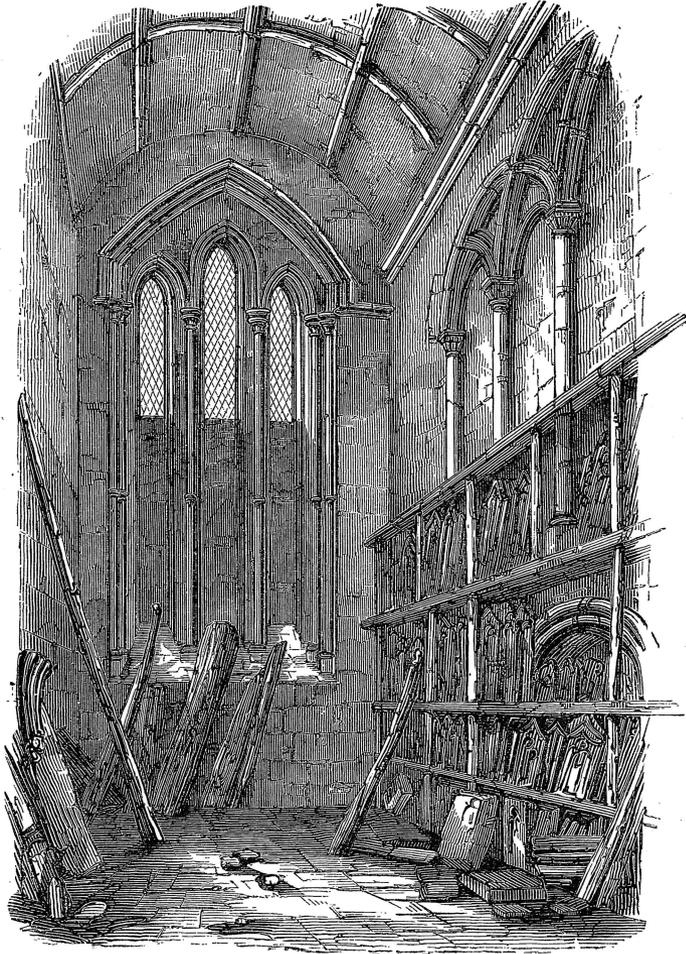
On the north side of the choir wall are two chapels, E, F; E retains Norman walls on three sides, and the east wall has the arch of a Norman window walled up, and the north wall an inserted Perpendicular window. This chapel was evidently an original part of the Norman church. The Norman arch of entrance from the transept, and the similar arch next to it, leading to the choir aisle, were changed for a pair of Perpendicular arches after the fire. The chapel bears the name of Bishop Roger of Sarum, A.D. 1107. East of it is another chapel, F, ingeniously formed by building two Early English walls to form the north and east sides, and utilising the east wall of the former chapel, and the north wall of the aisle, for the other two sides. Accordingly, Norman external arcades and blanked windows ornament its interior west and south sides, and its east has an Early English triplet, as shewn in the opposite sketch.

The choir and its aisles are complete and intelligible on the plan without explanation.

In rebuilding the choir, the Norman ruins appear to have been rased to the ground, and the present work erected, without being embarrassed by the old piers or wall. It is, therefore, a free and magnificent design of the period. The townsmen were forced to contribute to it, and it was built in Abbot Bradeforde's time—1436 to 1459.

The Norman materials were employed in the rebuilding. Thus, the panel surfaces of the Perpendicular work exhibit the small stones of the Norman masonry, encased with mullions of large stones; but the tracery heads of the panels are framed of large stones. The first sight of the work gives the impression that the panel framing has been engrafted upon untouched Norman walls and piers; but a close inspection of the masonry will show that this is certainly not the case. In the late restoration of the choir many of these small Norman stones, when taken out of the wall, showed Norman carving at the back.

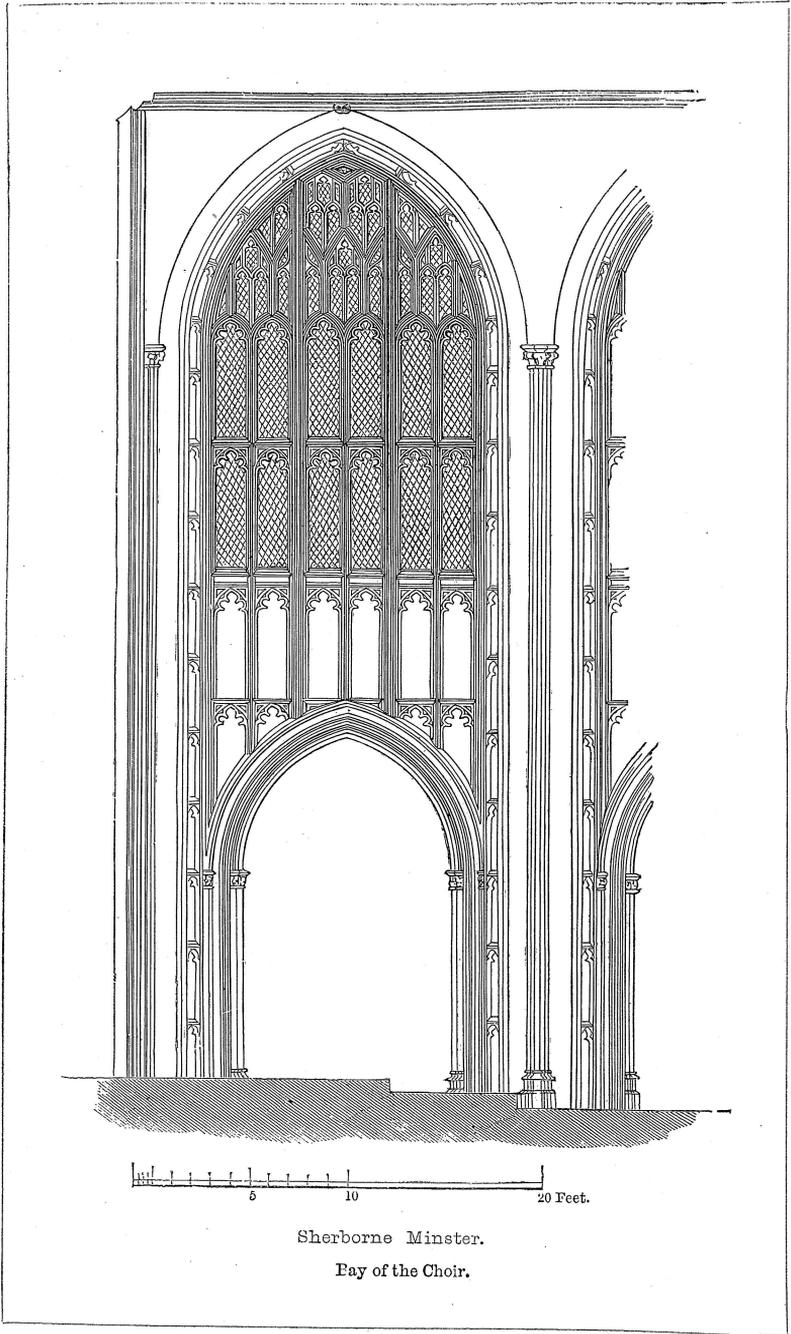
After the choir was completed, and of course the services re-established therein, we find that the nave was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style. Leland's phrase is that "Peter Ramesunne (1475 to 1504), next Abbate, saving one, to



*Miss Pettit, del.*

Sherborne Minster.

Chapel on the North side of the Choir.



Sherborne Minster.

Bay of the Choir.

Bradeford, buildid à fundamentis al the West Part of S Marie Chirch." Itin., vol. ii., f. 48.

Forty years had elapsed since the design of the choir had been prepared ; and it is not surprising that the design of the nave differs from that of the choir altogether, and that the rebuilding was also carried on another system. The nave escaped the fire, and its stones were not injured by calcination. The irregular spacing of the present piers, which I will presently explain in detail, can, in my opinion, only be accounted for on the supposition that they contain in their hearts the core of the piers of an earlier and ruder work.

Also the difference in design between the nave and choir as exhibited in Mr. Petit's two elevations on the opposite and following pages, shows that it was forced upon the builders by the necessity of employing these old piers.

In the choir the vault shafts, and great part of the pier-moldings, rise uninterruptedly from the pavement to the level of the springing of the vault.

In the nave, on the contrary, the design is divided horizontally into two stories by a string molding, with pier arches below, and large clerestory windows above. The windows are separated from each other by vault shafts descending from the fan tracery of the roof, and resting on angel corbels placed immediately above the horizontal string molding.

The upper story divides the nave into five equal compartments, of windows and fan vaulting. Beneath the horizontal molding the series of pier arches also divides the length of the nave into five compartments. But the arches are not only of greatly unequal width, but the piers of the north and south sides do not always stand opposite to each other.

It follows that the vault shafts and angel corbels rarely stand over the middle of the spandrel walls of the pier arches. But as these spandrels are left completely bare of ornamentation, there are no architectural lines to connect the decoration of the upper story with the lower, and thus the irregularities escape general observation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In the plan the dotted lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, show the distribution of the vault and clerestory window into five equal compartments.

The dotted lines I, K, L, M, N, O, which connect the centres of the pier with the

vault shafts of the north side aisle, show the distribution of the side aisle wooden fan-vaults. By comparing the portion of these two systems of lines, the irregularities of the pier arches become evident. Similarly, on the south side, the irregular

The nature of the irregularities of the pier arches betray their Norman origin. It is not unusual in Norman churches to find a pier arch of smaller span than the others next to the tower pier. This is apparently intended to enable its pier to assist better in buttressing the tower pier. Wimborne minster may be quoted as a neighbouring example.

The transepts and tower piers are essentially Norman, but have Perpendicular windows inserted, which it is not my purpose to describe. I will merely mention that on the outer surface of the east clerestory wall of the south transept, above the chapel, G, the traces of the jamb of a Norman window, carefully preserved in the restorations, may still be seen.

These transepts, and the Norman arches of the tower intervening between the Perpendicular work of the choir and that of the nave, completely separate the one from the other, so that their differences of style are not brought into juxtaposition. The western tower arch,<sup>7</sup> much lower than the fan vaultings, divides the choir vault from the nave vault. But the eastern tower arch is entirely removed, so as to leave the range of fan vaulting of the choir uninterrupted. The manner in which this is carried out is completely explained in Mr. Petit's paper (pp. 195, 196).

The Norman porch is at P on the south side. This was rebuilt with the same stones from the foundation at the beginning of the restoration, in 1850, under Mr. Carpenter, who, in accordance with the theory which then prevailed, determined to finish the upper part with a Norman composition of his own, instead of replacing the Perpendicular parapet with which it had been capped by the Mediæval architect of the nave, and which connected it so harmoniously with the exterior of the building.

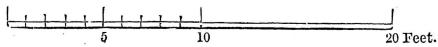
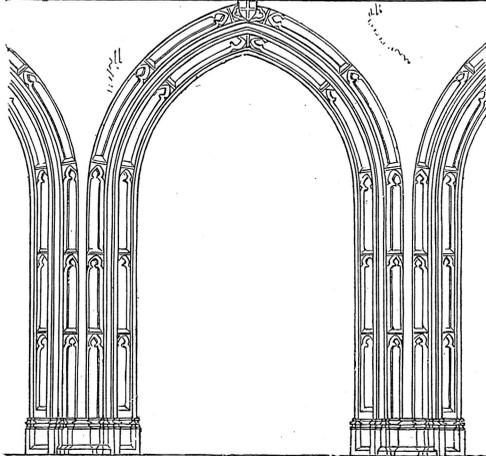
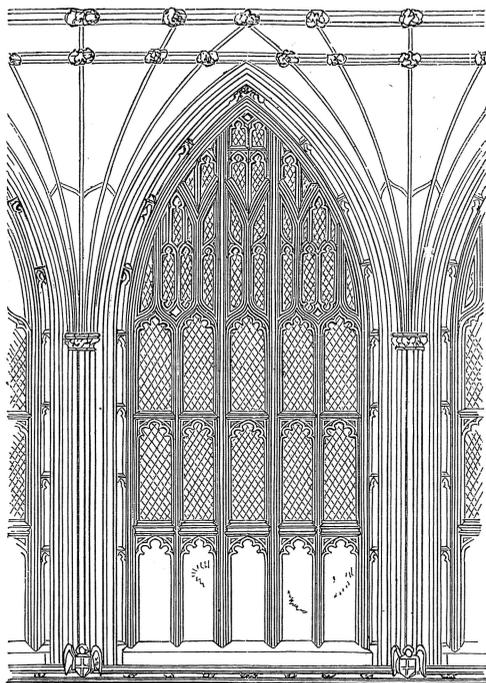
The opinion, so forcibly and admirably expressed by Mr. Petit,<sup>8</sup> that "the old porch of Sherborne, Norman below and Perpendicular above, was far more valuable, and to the eye

spacing is shown even on the outside, by the buttresses. On the north side, the cloister made buttresses superfluous. But as the cloister was destroyed at the Reformation, the aisle wall, losing its support, began to give way, and was bolstered up by clumsy buttresses, which in the late restoration have given place to those which are indicated by the dotted lines.

8, 9, 10, 11, 12, show the remains of the vault shafts of the cloister built by Abbot Frithe (1349-1371). The Decorated windows of the north aisle are part of the work.

<sup>7</sup> The position of the Norman tower arch is at 6, 7, in the plan.

<sup>8</sup> Transactions, Meeting of the Inst. at Bristol, p. 200.



Sherborne Minster,  
Bay of the Nave.



of the artist, perhaps, more beautiful than a restoration of the same porch, Normanised to the very point of the gable," now represents the conviction of the majority of the architects, antiquaries, and artists, who inspected it upon occasion of the late meeting of the Archæological Institute.

We may now examine the remains of the church of Alhalowes, as shown in the plan.<sup>9</sup> These consist of the lower part of the long wall, *q, v*, which bounded its aisle on the north, and of the four respond piers, *Q, R, S, T*, which are engrafted into the west front of the church. In Mr. Petit's view of the west end, at the beginning of this paper, a portion of the long wall is seen at the left hand, and three of the ruined respond piers. The style of these remains is late Decorated or Early Perpendicular. The south respond, *T*, is the most perfect, being the only one that retains a portion of the springing of the arch.<sup>1</sup> They are all in a very decayed state; but they show that four similar and parallel arches abutted against the west wall of the church. The long wall, now reduced to the office of a high garden wall, has a series of projections, *r, s, t, u*, from its southern face; the plan of one of which is given at fig. 3, in the margin of the general plan. In the centre of each is a shaft, the original capital of which sustained the roof-frame of the side aisles, and the recessed wall faces between are the sill walls of the side aisle windows, arranged in the same manner as those in the inside of the minster.<sup>2</sup> But this wall terminates eastward at *q* with the lower part of a respond, exactly answering to *Q*, and showing that here was a high arch, opening into the space, *v*, which is at present hemmed in on the north by the restored gable of the monastic hall, usually termed the

<sup>9</sup> In a Plan of Sherborne, taken from actual survey by J. Ladd, 1735, said by Hutchins to have been in his time in possession of the Governors of the Alms House, and of which a reduced copy is engraved in his County History, the site of Alhalowes is labelled "Ruins of a church or chapel." From this we may conclude that considerable remains were then standing.

<sup>1</sup> A plan of this respond is given in the general plan, fig. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The north aisle of the minster nave excepted, for that is perfectly plain; the south aisle, and the aisles of the presbytery have the recessed sills in question. An instance of a western appendage to a

church somewhat similar to Alhalowes occurs at Great Yarmouth, where, in 1330, it was determined by the young men of the town to erect an entirely new building 107 ft. long N. to S., and 47 ft. wide E. to W., at the west end of the great church, to be called the Bachelors' Aisle. Foundations were laid, but the structure proceeded slowly; and it was ultimately abandoned in consequence of the plague, in 1348. It served as a quarry for many years to the town. The foundations were uncovered some years ago, and the plan is given by Mr. Seddon. Vide Transactions of the Institute of British Architects, 1864, p. 75.

Refectory, and is completely open to the garden on the west.

But this arch, *q*, *g*, authorises us to suppose that the arch which sprang from *t*, the corresponding respond to *q*, was similarly arranged with respect to the south aisle wall. Thus, *r* and *s* being assumed as the abutments of a range of pier arches, we obtain a church with a centre and two side aisles,<sup>3</sup> as shown in the outline.

The arch *t* freely opens to the space *w*. But the original disposal of these spaces *v* and *w* must remain a mystery. They may have been enclosed as chapels, which appears to be the most probable supposition.

The long space *v*, *w*, was apparently arranged for the purpose of freeing the parish church from immediate contact with the west end of the minster, by serving the purpose of a vestibule common to the two. A reredos, *w*, *x*, with lateral screens, probably received the parish altar, and thus *v*, *w*, would become a continuation of the side aisles like a procession path, and an imitation of the arrangement of the east end of the minster itself. This path would give free access to the great western door, and to the lateral doors of the minster, and also to the chapels *v*, *w*, and even the latter may have been a porch.

The lateral door, *u*, was manifestly that which acquired so much importance in the dispute, as will appear below.<sup>4</sup> But the traces of another lateral door may be seen at *y*.

The great Perpendicular window of the west front seems at first sight to make the abutment of the roof of Alhalowes church impossible. We know that this window was part of the works of Abbot Ramesunne eighty or ninety years after Alhalowes was built. I am informed that until the restoration the lower panels of the tracery were blank panels. The original ridge of Alhalowes roof probably reached only about half way up the clerestory wall at the minster, and the Perpendicular architect would alter it by sloping it downwards to the new window sill, or hipping it, as the term is, so as to allow free light to the window. This device is commonly employed, as for example at the junction of the Lady chapel with the high east window of Gloucester Cathedral.

<sup>3</sup> The width of the centre aisle is 18 ft. of the south aisle 16 ft. 10 in. 2 in., of the north aisle 14 ft. 6 in., and

<sup>4</sup> Vide p. 108.

Having now described the minster and the church of Alhalowes, I will endeavour to elucidate the history of that church, and the quarrel between the monks and the parishioners to which it gave rise. This dispute has been the theme of every historian of the minster, from Leland to the excellent Handbook of the present vicar. My only apology for reviving this oft-told tale is the fortunate acquisition of a document, which appears to me to clear up much of the ambiguity that hangs about the details of the affair.

The document is no other than the "Ordinance made between the abbot and convent and the parishioners,"<sup>5</sup> discovered apparently by Hutchins, the laborious and indefatigable historian of the county, in Bishop Nevill's Register at Salisbury, and of which he has given an English abstract. But this turns out to be unfortunately erroneous in several particulars, and omits important details. He has also misdated it one year too early.

As no documentary evidence can be thoroughly interpreted without possessing it in its original language, and still less through the medium of a translated abstract, I was induced, when preparing this memoir, to take steps for obtaining a complete copy of the original deed.

I have much pleasure in expressing my thanks to the Dean of Salisbury for his obliging assistance in carrying out my request, and also especially to James Hussey, Esq., who most kindly took the trouble of transcribing from Bishop Nevill's Register the entire document. This I have printed in the Appendix, No. I, and will now present to my readers a literal translation of the whole. It will be found, on perusal, to give a vivid and most interesting picture of the manners of the time, and of the jealousies then existing between parish priests, monks, and laity, as well as clear evidence relating to the church of Alhalowes.

“ORDINANCE MADE BY ROBERT (NEVILL), BISHOP OF SARUM,  
BETWEEN THE CONVENT OF THE MONASTERY OF SHIR-  
BORNE AND THE PARISHIONERS THERE.

To every child of the holy mother church, who may inspect these presents, and especially to those who are interested in their matter or may be in future, we, Robert, by

<sup>5</sup> Hutchins' Dorsetshire, 2nd edit. vol. iv. p. 99.

Divine permission Bishop of Sarum, offer salutation through Him who is the true salvation of all.

We have received from those religious men the Abbot and convent of Shirborne, in our diocess, a serious accusation or complaint, to the effect that notwithstanding a baptismal font has existed within the nave of the church of the aforesaid monastery from the beginning and primeval foundation thereof,—in which font every infant of the town and parish of the said Shirborne has received baptism from a time beyond which the memory of man extendeth not,—yet certain parishioners there, namely, Richard Howell, Thomas Draper, John Toker, Walter Paskuly, and John Aysheley, and others their confederates, about eight in number, casting behind them the fear of God, have constructed and caused to be set up a new font in the *inferior part of the aforesaid church, where the parishioners are wont to hear divine service*, and outside the accustomed place (A), doing this of their own rashness, contrary to our prohibition to them concerning this matter, and to the no small prejudice and trouble of the monastery. For this cause, and on account of the ringing of the parish bells for matins, also because of the *narrow passage of the doorway in the intermediate wall at its south part, between the parishioners place and the body (corpus) of the church of the monastery* aforesaid (B), grave dissension arose between the abbot and convent and certain of the aforesaid parishioners, when the procession to the font in the church of the said monastery took place at Easter and at Pentecost.

Wherefore on the part of the said religious men we were humbly requested to provide a suitable remedy in this matter. Desiring to be certified of the truth of the premises, we visited the monastery and town of Shirborne in person. There, in the Abbots' Hall, on the 12th November of the subscribed year (1436), appeared before us John Bazett, John Kaylewey, Richard Rochett, and John Sprotert, on the part and in the name of all the parishioners, besides other persons, to the number of one hundred or more; and earnestly petitioned that we would deign to restore the baptismal font of the church of the said monastery, and all other matters above recited, to their antient use and pristine condition in the *body or nave* (C) (in corpore seu navi) of the church of the said monastery.

A proclamation was then made in the vulgar tongue

before all those present, that if any one either for his own interest, or that of the parishioners of the parish of Shirborne aforesaid, desired to oppose or contradict the aforesaid petition, he was now to declare it. But no opposition or contradiction was made, either particular or general.

And because, by the inquisition we made in this matter, we found every particular in the said complaint to be true.

Considering, moreover, the great prejudice and injury that might accrue to the monastery in future by the erection of the new font above mentioned, and also that nothing ought to be changed without urgent cause, which has been established by long custom. Also having duly weighed the advice of our counsel learned in the law, and assisting us in this judgment :

We will, and order, and by the tenor of these presents with the concurrence and expressed wish of the abbot and convent, and of all the parishioners above mentioned, do decree :

(1.) That the said font which, with daring rashness has been newly set up, be utterly destroyed and removed, and carried out of the church by those who caused it to be made. This removal of the font and of its materials should have been put into immediate execution under our own inspection.

(2.) The ringing of the bells to matins for the parishioners throughout the whole year shall be made after the sixth hour has been struck by the *clocka* or *horologium* of the monastery,<sup>6</sup> and not before, except on the solemn feasts, viz., Allsaints, Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter.

(3.) Also the baptismal font of the monastery shall be set up and replaced in its old and accustomed position, and all infants born or to be born in the said town shall, as of old, be baptized therein.

(4.) The intermediate door and entrance for the procession of the parishioners to the font, shall be enlarged and

<sup>6</sup> . . . . "horam sextam per clockam seu horologium monasterii signatum." The word *Cloca* or *Clocca*, &c. in Ducange is explained as "cloche," a *Bell*, and this is the original meaning of it. But, in the present case, it is a bell struck by a clock, for the sixth hour is to be indicated or pointed out by the abbey clock or horo-

loge. Clocks striking hours are mentioned in 1330, and were therefore common a century afterwards. But this is an early instance of the application of the word *clocka*, which has now completely superseded the ancient meaning, to the machine instead of the bell.

arched, so as to give a more ample space, and bring it to its original form.

(5.) The manner and form of the procession and other ceremonies about the font are to be observed in the old accustomed manner.

(6.) There shall be made, at the expense of the monastery, an intermediate partition in the nave of the monastic church (*ecclesiæ monasterialis*), close to the choir of the monks, so that there shall be a distinct separation between the monks and the aforesaid parishioners.

(7.) This replacement of the font and enlargement of the door must be effectually completed before Christmas-day next.

All and every of these premises must be faithfully observed, as well by the abbot and the convent, as by the parishioners of the said parish, under pain of the greater excommunication.

Given at our manor of Remmesbury, on the eighth day of January, A. D. MCCCCXXXVI,<sup>7</sup> and in the tenth year of our consecration."

From this deed we gather, from (A), that the parishioners of Sherborne were wont to hear divine service in a place termed the *inferior part of the church of the monastery*.

Next, from (B) and (C), that there was *an intermediate wall between this place of the parishioners and the nave of the monastic church*. Therefore the place of the parishioners was outside the nave, and not formed by a mere screen or partition cutting off a part of the nave.

*Body* is the term employed in the clause (B), but from (C) we learn that in accordance with universal practice, the writers of this document considered it to be synonymous with *nave*.

Further, it appears from (B), that there was a narrow door in the south part of the intermediate wall, which communi-

<sup>7</sup> This date belongs to the ecclesiastical year, which began on the 25th March, and in modern style would be 1437. The investigation in the Abbot's Hall took place on 12th November, 1436, and the Bishop's ordinance published on the 8th of the following January, both being in the 15th year of Henry VI., and not the 14th, as Hutchins says. In his abstract

he states the manner and nature of the quarrel very obscurely, and omits the fact of the Bishop's holding an inquest in the Abbot's Hall, as well as the order for the destruction and removal of the new illegal font, and the fact that the contracted door was at the south part of the intermediate wall.

cated between the parishioners' place and the nave of the monastic church.

Thus the intermediate wall must have stood north and south, and could have been no other than the west front of the nave.

Consequently the *place of the parishioners* on the other side of this wall, was the structure which is termed the church of *Alhalowes*.

In fact, the *inferior*, or lower end of the nave, is necessarily the west end when the term is used not with reference to altitude, but to dignity. As we say, the upper and lower end of a table, or a room, so the upper, or *superior* end of a church is that where the altar is placed, and the opposite is the inferior, or lower end.

It may be perceived from this document, that the monks were as much or more at fault than the parishioners in this matter. For although the bishop begins his ordinance in a tone that favors the convent, and imperatively condemns the parishioners for setting up a font of their own without due ecclesiastical authority, and also for ringing their bells at times inconvenient to the convent, it appears from the latter clauses that the monks had annoyed the parishioners by removing the old font from its original position in the nave, to one that was inconvenient to them, and also that they had altered the doorway through which their baptismal processions were wont to pass, and made it much narrower.

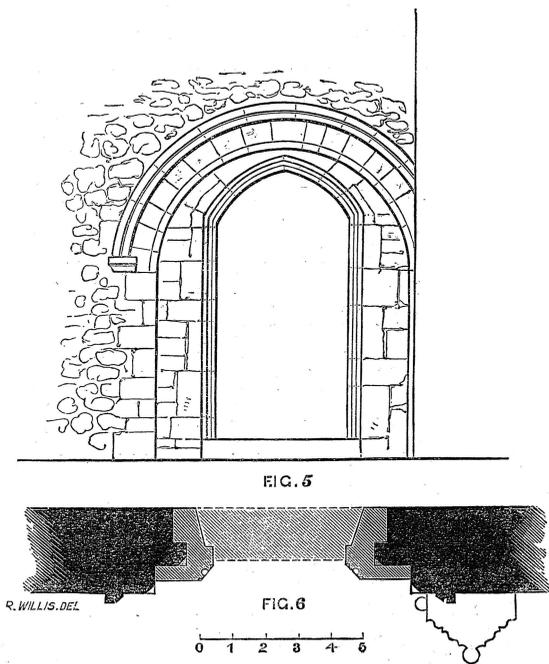
The clause (B) identifies the narrowed doorway with the door in the west front (U in the general plan, fig. 1), which opens to the south aisle of the nave. This doorway is represented in plan and elevation in the engravings on the following page, and is also shown in Mr. Petit's view of the west end. It is now completely walled up, but the arrangement of its arches corresponds so remarkably with the description in the clauses (B) and (4), as to leave no doubt of its being the very door which was complained of.

The plan (fig. 6) taken at a level just above the Norman impost, shows the original Norman doorway in a black tint, the inserted doorway in a lighter tint, and the wall which closes it in a still lighter tint bounded by dotted lines.

The only visible parts of the Norman doorway, and of the inserted pointed doorway, are those which are seen in the

elevation (fig. 5), and on the inside of the church the wall is plastered and flat. I have inserted in the plan (fig. 6), those portions of the Norman and pointed doorways which are buried in the wall, in accordance with other examples of doorways, to make the fact of the narrowing of the passage by the insertion of the pointed arch, more clear.<sup>8</sup>

The external face of the wall which blocks up the pointed arch is at present wholly occupied by a large monumental tablet to the memory of Benjamin Vowell and his three wives,<sup>9</sup> who died in 1783.



Elevation and Plan of the South-Western Doorway of the Nave.

It appears from the Bishop's ordinance, that the parishioners were divided in opinion respecting the new font, and quarrelling amongst themselves; and as he had given to the monks nearly a year to carry out the amendment and removal of the annoyances which arose on their side

<sup>8</sup> Fig. 4, in the margin of the general plan, is a section of the continuous molding of the inserted doorway.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth remarking that this name is apparently the same as that of Richard

Fowell, who joined in setting up the new font, so that possibly a descendant of the malcontent who was aggrieved at the narrowing of the doorway, has blocked it up altogether.

towards the parishioners, we may easily imagine that delays and evasions on both sides helped to bring about the well-known violent termination of these disputes, which is recorded by Leland, as follows :—

“This was the Cause of the Abolition of the Paroch Chirch there. The Monkes and the Tounes Men felle at variaunce bycause the Tounes Men tooke privilege to use the Sacrament of Baptisme in the Chapelle of Al-Halowes. Whereupon one Walter Gallor a stoute Bocher, dwelling yn Shirburn, defacid clene the Fontstone, and after the variaunce growing to a playne sedition and the Townes-Menne by the Mene of an Erle of Huntendune, lying yn those Quarters and taking the Townes-Mennes Part, and the Bisshop of Saresbyri the Monkes Part, a Preste of Al-Halowis shot a Shaft with fier into the Toppe of that Part of S. Marye Chirch that devidid the Est Part that the Monkes usid from (that) the Townes-Men usid : and this Partition chauncing at that Tyme to be thakkid yn the Rofe was sette a fier, and consequently al the hole Chirch, the Lede and Belles meltid, was defacid.” Leland’s Itin., vol. ii., f. 47.

It may be a question whether Walter Gallor was employed by the monks and the townsmen who supported their views, to deface the new illegal font, or whether he boldly destroyed the abbey font in revenge for the destruction of the new one. It appears to me that the first interpretation is the one which best agrees with the terms employed by Leland in his two memoranda. The first declares that the townsmen baptized in the Chapelle, “*whereupon* the Bocher defacid the Font stone.” The second (Itin., vol. iii., f. 90) runs thus :—“S Mary the Abbay Chirch sumtime a Paroche Chirch burnid a hunderith Yers or more sins, by a Sedition in the Toune *for a Font broken down* by a Boucher caullid Walter Gallor.”

In both, the sedition arises because the *inhabitants* are aggrieved by the butcher breaking a font, and the first memorandum shows that this destruction was meant to stop the baptism in the Chapel.

By comparing the ordinance with the several memoranda in which Leland alludes to the parish church and to Alhalowes, the history of the latter may be made tolerably clear.

The ordinance shows that, when it was written the

parishioners attended the ordinary services of the church in Alhalowes, but were compelled to baptize their children in the nave of the minster; and Leland writes that "the Body of the Abbey Chirch dedicate to our Lady servid ontille a hunderith Yeres syns for the chife Paroch Chirch of the Toun." Alhalowes was therefore in the condition of a *chapel*, having no parochial rights of baptism and sepulture. It is quite possible that the discontent of the parishioners arose in the first instance from their having been banished for the ordinary services from their ancient parish church in the nave when Alhalowes was built. Be that as it may, Leland's first mention of Alhalowes before the riot terms it the "*Chapelle* of Al-Halowes."

Then comes the riot, and the fire and the consequent rebuilding of the east end of the church, which must have driven the monks to establish their choir in the nave, and to consent to the legal transformation of Alhalowes chapel into the parish church, in order to get rid of the parishioners. This view explains Leland's assertion that the riot "was the *cause* of the Abolition of the Paroch Chirch" in the nave of the minster, and his subsequent memorandum that "after thys tyme Al-Halowes *Chirch* and not S Maryes was usid for the Paroch Chirch."

These notes were made at his first visit, about 1538; but the monastery was suppressed March 18, 1539. The church was granted by the king to Sir John Horsey, and by him sold to the parish; and this explains another note made by Leland, in the third volume of his *Itinerary*.<sup>1</sup> In this volume we find a series of concise memoranda recapitulating the history of the Abbey, and apparently written after a second visit, certainly after the above transactions. For amongst them is the third note relating to Alhalowes, as follows:—"Alhalowes Paroch Chirch pullid down alate and the Paroch Chirch made in our Lady Chirch at the Abbay." And there it has rested ever since.

We may now turn to the minster itself, and consider the effects of the fire.

The part which was thatched must have been the tower; and thus, any person standing on the roof of Alhalowes' chapel, would be in sight of it, and might have shot a fiery

<sup>1</sup> F. 90. Leland's *Itinerary* was begun about 1538, and presented complete to the king in 1546.

bolt into it. It may be remarked that in two of the bosses of the vault of the presbytery an arrow is carved, with its point directed eastward.

Leland qualifies or explains his assertion that the whole church was defaced, by saying that the "Fier came not to the chapelle of our Lady, by reason that it was of an older Building." Also that "The Porche of the south side of the Body of S Mary Chirch is an antique Peace of Work, and was not defacid with Fier, bycause it Stoode with a far lower Rofe than the Body of the Chirch did."

The extent of the damage to the church is also well defined by a licence<sup>2</sup> to acquire lands in mortmain to the value of 10*l.* a year on account of the fire (*vide* Appendix, No. II.), dated 24 Hen. VI. (1446), eight or nine years after the occurrence. This declares that "a sudden fire had lately<sup>3</sup> consumed and devastated the choir and campanile of the monastery of Shirborn, together with the bells hanging therein and other buildings of the Abbot and convent."

As no mention is made of the nave in this preamble we may be assured that it was not in the least injured, for such preambles omit nothing that may tend to make the injuries appear as great as possible.

In conclusion, a few words must be said in reference to the general restoration of the church. It appears that the structure had in the first quarter of the present century exhibited settlements of an alarming character, which gradually increased, but led to no very decided results or repair until the late Mr. Carpenter was consulted in 1848, and the work of thorough restoration commenced in June, 1849, under his superintendence. The portion first undertaken included the nave and aisles, followed by the south transept, which required a new elaborate oak roof, and appears to have been completed, together with the repairs of the tower piers and south transept, before August 13, 1851, when a church festival was held to commemorate the restoration.

Of the total expenditure of this part of the work, amounting very nearly to fourteen thousand pounds, more

<sup>2</sup>This licence, for a copy of which I am indebted to the kindness of J. Burt, Esq., is referred to by Hutchins, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>"edificia . . . nuper per quoddam subitum incendium combusta." The dis-

crepancy between this phrase and the date of the document must be attributed to the legal delays interposed between the application for the licence and its issue.

than one-half was borne by Earl Digby, the impropiator of the manor and great tithes ; the remainder raised by subscriptions, donations, legacies, and other usual sources.

The restoration of the choir with its aisles and chapels remained untouched for five years. At length Mr. Wingfield Digby, having succeeded to the English estates of the late Earl Digby, undertook, with singular munificence, to complete, at his own cost, the restoration of the remainder of the church. He appointed Mr. W. Slater architect, under whose directions the work of the choir was carried out, at a cost of nearly eighteen thousand pounds, and the restoration festival took place on August 18, 1858.

These restorations have been carried out from the beginning in the most careful and judicious manner. The structure has been perfectly consolidated, from the foundations upwards ; the distinctive features of the masonry preserved so carefully, that every part of the church appears as if it had just left the hands of its original builders ; and the fragments of Norman and Early English work on the north side of the choir, and elsewhere, which mark the existence of previous arrangements, have been thoroughly respected and left untouched.

The restoration of ancient churches presents the difficulty of consistently maintaining the evidences of venerable antiquity, which connects them with the piety of our forefathers, and the history of the past ; while on the other hand, the sacred purposes of the building compel us to remove every symptom of decay or apparent neglect that might be misinterpreted into indifference to those purposes.

This difficulty appears to me to have been overcome in the case of Sherborne Minster with extraordinary ability and success.

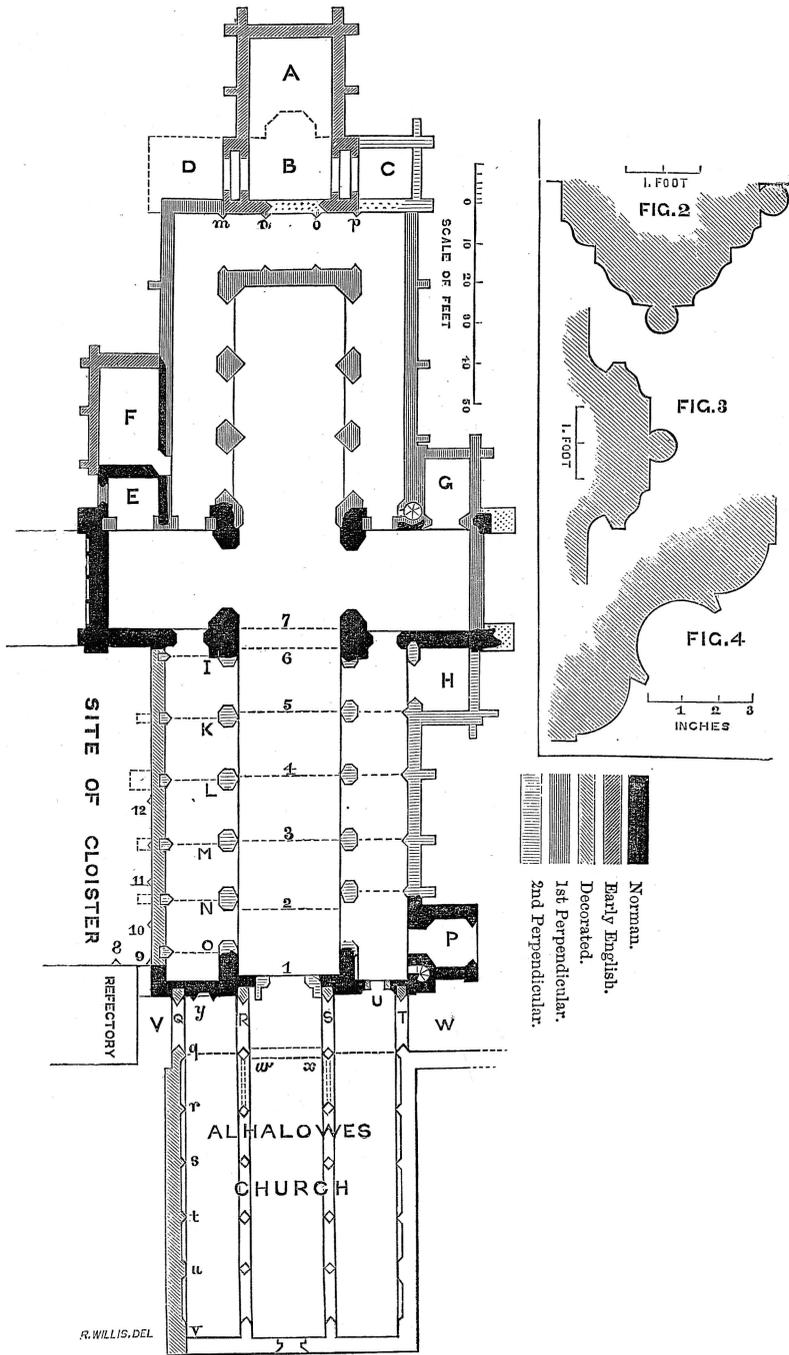


Fig. 1. Historical Plan of Sherborne Minster, Dorsetshire.



## APPENDIX.

## I.) ORDINATIO INTER ABBATEM ET CONVENTUM MONASTERII DE SHIRBORNE ET PAROCHIANOS IBIDEM.—Reg. Nevill, f. 108.

Universis sanctæ matris ecclesiæ filiis presentes literas inspecturis, ac presertim illi vel illis quos presens tangerit negotium vel quomodolibet tangere poterit in futurum, Nos Robertus permissione divinâ Sarum Episcopus salutem in eo qui est omnium vera salus. Querelam religiosorum virorum Abbatis et conventus monasterii de Shirborne nostræ dioceseos gravem recepimus continentem quod licet infra navem ecclesiæ monasterii predicti ab exordio et primævâ fundatione ejusdem fons baptismalis extiterat erectus, in quo singuli infantes villæ et parochiæ de Shirborne predictæ, a tempore cujus contrarii memoria hominum non existit, lavaero regenerationis hactenus fuerant renati seu saltem ita renasci deberent, certum parochiani ibidem, videlicet, Ricardus Howell, Thomas Draper, Johannes Toker, Walterus Paskuly, et Johannes Aysheley, ac alii cum eisdem confederati circiter octo in numero, Dei timore postposito, alium fontem novum in inferiori parte ecclesiæ predictæ ubi parochiani divina servitia audire solent, et extra locum consuetum, propriâ temeritate contra prohibitionem etiam nostram eis in hac parte factam erexerunt et construxerunt, seu erigi procuraverunt, in dicti monasterii prejudicium non modicum et gravamen. Cujus pretextu et occasione etiam pulsationis campanarum parochialium ad matutinas, necnon super arto et stricto introitu ostii in muro intermedio in parte australi inter locum parochianorum et corpus ecclesiæ monasterii predicti, cum processione ad fontem in ecclesiâ dicti monasterii in festis Paschæ et Penthecostes faciendâ, inter abbatem et conventum ac certos parochianos predictos gravis suborta fuit materia dissensionis. Quare pro parte dictorum religiosorum virorum nobis humiliter fuit supplicatum sibi de remedio per nos in hac parte provideri oportuno. Cupientes igitur de premissis debite certiorari ad monasterium et villam de Shirborne predictum pretextu premissorum personaliter accessimus; ubi constituti coram nobis duodecimo die mensis Novembris Anno Domini infrascripto in Aulâ abbatis predicti Johannes Bazett, Johannes Kaylewey, Ricardus Rochett, et Johannes Sprotter, vice et nomine omnium parochianorum, et alii in multitudine copiosâ, videlicet, ad numerum centenarium et ultra, nobis omni instantiâ supplicarunt quatenus fontem baptismalem ecclesiæ dicti monasterii ac omnia alia superius recitata ad antiquum usum et statum pristinum in corpore seu navi ecclesiæ dicti monasterii reducere et reponere dignemur; factâ deinde proclamatione in vulgari coram omnibus adtunc ibidem presentibus quod si quis pro interesse suo vel parochianorum parochiæ de Shirborne predictæ vellet aliquid opponere seu contradicere supplicationi et petitioni predictis, quod effectualiter opponeret seu reclamaret quicquid contradicere seu opponere in premissis vellet. Nullus tum contradicitorum seu oppositorum apparuit ibidem in specie vel in genere. Et quia per inquisitionem quam fecimus in eâ parte diligentem invenimus singula contenta in dictâ querelâ fuisse et esse vera; considerantes insuper magnum prejudicium et injuriam per erectionem novi fontis supradicti dicto monasterio posse evenire in futuro, illudque non sine urgenti causâ mutandum quod usus longevi observavit auctoritas; ponderatis primitus in hac parte ponderandis de consilio jurisperitorum nobis in hac parte assistentium, volumus, ordinamus et tenore presentium de consensu et voluntate expressis abbatis et conventus ac omnium parochianorum supradictorum decernimus dictum fontem sic noviter et ausu temerario erectum destrui penitus et

amoveri ac ab ecclesiâ asportari per eosdem qui ipsum erigi fecerunt ; cujus quidem fontis amotio et ejusdem lapidum asportatio sub visu nostro incontinenti facta fuerit cum effectu, pulsationemque campanarum ad matutinas per totum annum exceptis festis solempnibus, videlicet, Omnium Sanctorum, Natalis Domini, Epiphaniæ et Paschæ pro parochianis fieri post horam sextam per clockam seu horologium prefati monasterii signatam, et non prius ; necnon fontem baptismalem ejusdem monasterii collocari et reponi in loco antiquo et consueto, infantesque natos seu nascituros dictæ villæ prout antiquitus fieri consuevit baptisari debere in eodem ; ostiumque intermedium supradictum introitumque ejusdem pro processione parochianorum ad fontem ingrediendum latiori spatio ampliari et archuari et in formam ab olim habitam reduci, modum insuper et formam processionis aliaque solempnia circa fontem more solito observari ; clausum etiam intermedium in navi ecclesiæ monasterialis juxta chorum monachorum ita quod sit quædam separatio distincta inter monachos et parochianos predictos fieri volumus sumptibus et expensis dicti monasterii ; captâ ad hoc temporis commoditate, et dicti fontis repositionem et ostii prelibati ampliacionem citra festum Natalis Domini proxime futurum effectualiter agi et fieri ordinamus. Premissa igitur omnia et singula tam per dictum abbatem et conventum quam per parochianos parochiæ predictæ inviolabiliter observari volumus decernimus statuimus et ordinamus in futuro sub penâ excommunicationis majoris quam in contravenientes omnes et singulos comminati fuimus fulminare. Quæ omnia et singula universitati vestræ tenore presentium innotescimus. In cujus rei testificationem sigillum nostrum ad causas presentibus duximus apponendum. Datum in manerio nostro de Remmesbury octavo die mensis Januarii Anno Domini Millesimo cccc<sup>mo</sup> tricesimo sexto et nostræ consecrationis anno decimo.

(II.) ROT. PAT. 24 HEN. VI., pt. 1, m. 6. (1446.)

De licencia acquirendi Shirborn'. Rex omnibus ad quos &c. salutem. Sciatis quod ex parte dilectorum nobis in Christo Abbatibus et Conventibus Monasterii de Shirborn' in Comitatu Dors', quod de fundacione inclitorum progenitorum nostrorum et nostro patronatu existit, nobis est lamentabiliter intimatum qualiter chorus et campanile monasterii predicti et campane in eodem campanili pendentes aliaque edificia eorundem Abbatibus et Conventibus nuper per quoddam subitum incendium combusta et totaliter devastata extiterunt ; iidemque Abbas et Conventus ex hac causa adeo depauperati fuerunt quod onera eis necessario Indies incumbencia absque gratia nostra speciali nequeunt supportare. Velimus pietatis intuitu cum eisdem nostros specialis gratiam et favorem benignissime impartiri. Nos premissa considerantes de gratia nostra speciali et absque fine ad opus nostrum percipienda concessimus et licenciam dedimus pro nobis et heredibus nostris quantum in nobis est prefatis Abbati et Conventui et successoribus suis quod ipsi terras tenementa et redditus cum pertinenciis ad valorem decem librarum per annum tam de feodo suo proprio quam alieno que de nobis non tenentur in capite adquirere possunt et tenere sibi et successoribus suis imperpetuum, statuto de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis edito non obstante ; dumtamen per inquisitiones inde debite capiendas et in Cancellariam nostram vel heredum nostrorum rite retornandas compertum sit quod id fieri possit absque dampno seu prejudicio nostri vel heredum nostrorum aut aliorum quorumcumque. In cujus &c. Teste Rege apud Westmonasterium primo die Martii.

Per breve de privato sigillo, &c.





Sherborne Minster.

View from the South Transept looking into the Nave.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

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WOODCUTS engraved for the memoir on Sherborne, by the Rev. J. L. Petit, first published in the Proceedings of the Archæological Institute, at Bristol, 1853, and employed for the illustration of the present memoir by his kind and liberal permission :—

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This last and most valuable sketch, made before the restorations were carried out, shows a stripe of Perpendicular panelling engrafted into the great Norman cylindrical shaft which occupies the south-east angle of the south-west tower-pier. It appears to have been the beginning of an intended conversion of the whole surface of the pier into similar panelling, in the same manner as in the piers of the nave. This curious specimen was unfortunately destroyed when the pier was restored. I was informed that the pier was in so ruinous a condition that it was necessary to underpin and almost rebuild it, and that the stripe was not replaced, because it was thought that it would give a slovenly and unfinished appearance to the renewed surface. Its value, as a piece of evidence to the gradual process of the conversion of this pier from one style to another, ought to have preserved it. As the joints and beds of the masonry are not indicated in this slight sketch, it is impossible to discover whether these panellings were constructed by simply cutting them in the Norman ashlar as it stood, or by removing the ashlar, stone by stone, and replacing it with new masonry. The stones which contained the arch-heads were, as it appears to me, necessarily new; but the vertical rectilinear mouldings and panel-surfaces might have been, and probably were, worked out of the Norman ashlar as it stood.