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St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol

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ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, BRISTOL.

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(WITH PLAN).

AS the late Dr. Norris aptly remarks at the beginning of his small book on Redcliffe Church.¹

“ Record in stone, record in writings—these are the two sources of information to which the student of Church architecture looks hopefully. If both are truthful and trustworthy, all is well. But how if one or both be untruthful and untrustworthy? What is he then to do? ”

Anyone trying to elucidate the history of this noble building is met at all points by ridiculous statements of no authority whatever and when he turns to the building itself, expecting it to tell its own tale, he finds every inch of masonry has either been renewed or scraped beyond recognition. The written fables can be rejected for what they are worth, but the wholesale destruction of the building inside and out cannot be passed over with equal equanimity. Words cannot express the feeling of indignation at the useless desecration that has been perpetrated in the cause of so called restoration, even fifty years after the mischief has been done.

There was a great church at Redcliffe in the twelfth century, but when it was begun is impossible now to say. The east end would be the first part to be erected and the whole would be carried on slowly to the west end. The north porch of this church fortunately remains almost intact and it certainly is not a day later than 1190. The side walls are panelled with pointed arches resting on detached columns having carved capitals with square

¹ Norris (Dr. J. P.), *Church of St. Mary, Redcliffe*. Bristol, 1882.

abacii. The outer arch has a number of detached columns in the jambs, and the porch is vaulted. There is a parvise above with a two light window in a steep gable over the entrance. The church had a nave approximately the same width as the present building and was vaulted throughout, the wall ribs of the main span still shew in the south wall of the tower.

Parish churches throughout the land have grown from the original building to what they now are and there is no known case in the middle ages of the ground being first cleared of the older work when a church had to be rebuilt. If a great scheme of enlarging or rebuilding was undertaken the last thing to be done was the alteration of the existing church. A church was in daily use and services had to be performed in it during the whole time it was being altered, so that some part of the building had always to be fit for divine service. It is necessary to remember this in tracing the development of this or any other ancient church. However uniform the design of a completed building may be, it grew to that uniformity by a series of additions and did not become so by one act of building straight from the foundation.

There were many parish churches begun in the twelfth century, but in populous neighbourhoods none remain to us in anything like the same form in which they were conceived. The large town churches of this and the next century invariably consisted of a chancel, transepts, nave and central tower, sometimes with aisles to certain parts and sometimes without; but the transeptal plan with a central tower may be safely claimed to have been universal and there is no reason to suppose that St. Mary Redcliffe was any exception to the rule.

The general fate of a central tower of early days was sooner or later to fall down and this is exactly what I believe happened at Redcliffe. If the central tower had not fallen there was no reason to have built the present

tower in the thirteenth century to an already completed church. Where a central tower fell it is usually found that its successor was erected so that the same catastrophe should not occur again. Sometimes the new tower was built entirely separate from the church, but more often it was attached to the end of a transept or to the west end of the nave. In such a position three walls of the tower could be built solidly from the foundations instead of on four detached pillars. A late example of this occurs at Calne Church in Wiltshire where the central tower fell in 1638 and the new tower was built at the end of the north transept.

Barrett records¹ that there were indulgences in his hands granted towards the building of the church, one in 1232, two in 1246, one in 1278, and one in 1287 and as they were in Latin there is no possibility of Chatterton being the author. I have shewn that the original church was not finished before 1190 and it is obvious that no serious repairs could have been required so soon as 1232, but with the fall of the central tower the urgency of repair would account for this method of raising money. I take it the first indulgence was given directly after the calamity occurred, for mending the damage to the church itself, and the four later indulgences were presumably to aid the building of the new tower, which shews by its architectural evidence was a slow process.

Nothing remains to shew how the damage to the church was made good, but I am inclined to think that the transepts were done away with and the side walls of the nave and quire were joined together in a straight line. I am led to this conclusion from two reasons, first that when the present north transept was set out the south wall of its crypt was in line with the outer wall of the original north aisle, and secondly the space from the westernmost pair of pillars in the presbytery to the easternmost pair of pillars

¹ Barrett (William, F.S.A.), *History of Bristol*, p. 567.

in the nave is equal in length to three bays of the nave, and this could hardly have been the case had transepts intervened when the new work was set out. Further, as the fall of the central tower was probably due to failure in the north transept, caused by the irregularity of its foundations, it is reasonable to suppose that any chance of further trouble from the same cause would be eliminated in the new work, which would accordingly be kept entirely on the top of the rock forming the higher ground on which the church was built.

The work of mending the church would be carried out as quickly as possible. The new tower was begun at the west end of the north aisle, as there was no room for it between the west end of the nave and the street, but was only carried up one storey. It was then covered by a flat lead roof, the groove for the flashing of which still shews above the floor of the ringing chamber, and then building work ceased for a considerable time.

In the Mayor's Kalendar compiled in 1479 by Robert Ricart, the town clerk, is an entry under the year 1294, which has been quoted and believed in by nearly every writer on the subject, to the effect that "this yere the aforesayd Simon Burton began to build Redclyf Church." The church itself clearly shews that no such building ever took place, but we must be grateful to Dr. Norris for first pointing out that this entry is an insertion in the original book of apparently seventeenth century date.¹

The church appears to have had some relic of Our Lady, of more than usual importance, presented to it towards the end of the thirteenth century. The church being a parish church the space within was limited and a number of pilgrims to the relic passing in and out would have been inconvenient. It was therefore necessary to house the relic in a position where a number of pilgrims could be easily dealt with, and the splendid addition to the north porch was the result.

¹ Dr. Norris, *The Church of St. Mary Redcliffe*, p. 9.

In the second quarter of the fourteenth century the south aisle of the nave was begun to be rebuilt, with the new wall outside the old, and provided for vaulting like its predecessor. The south porch was added at the same time and appears to have been stopped by the scourge of the Black Death in 1349. The date of the work is proved by the monumental recesses in the three eastern bays, which though virtually modern are a restoration of what was found. They are so like the recesses in prior Knowle's work at the cathedral that they cannot possibly be later than 1340.¹ Another feature which should be noticed is the different section of the plinths of this aisle and porch from the rest of the church.

The next effort of the parishioners of Redcliffe was one to fill us with admiration at the present time. The twelfth century church, by the middle of the fourteenth century, had probably become in a bad condition and out of fashion, as the narrow windows did not allow for the display of painted glass which was then the vogue. So instead of humbly inserting new windows in the old walls in the manner of their poorer neighbours the Redcliffe folk determined to rebuild the whole church from one end to the other upon a magnificent scale. The earlier building tied the width of the main span but beyond this the ideas of the designers were allowed full sway. Only one other parish church, that of Patrington in Yorkshire, had been erected with double aisled transepts but the chancel there has no aisles, whereas Redcliffe was to have, besides the double aisles to the transepts, double aisles to the chancel and an eastern chapel besides.

There is no information when this work was begun but from a careful study of the character of the building, and comparison with dated examples elsewhere, there can be little doubt it was started about 1355 when the country had recovered from the dislocation caused by the Black

¹ Edmund Knowle was prior from 1306 to 1332.

Death. How the work was carried out is the most interesting question in connexion with the church though now very difficult to answer owing to the hopeless scraping and making new of all the masonry.

The old church had to remain in daily use till part of the new one was ready, so that the new walls outside the line of the old work would be first set out and carried up gradually to the existing building, before any considerable part of that structure was disturbed.

It is certain that the whole of the new building was contemplated from its first conception and set out at one time.

This mediæval setting out was not such an easy matter as it sounds, the old church would be standing in the midst of the new proposals, the new work had to join up with the old before the latter was taken down and the different thickness of the new walls had to be allowed for. If any irregularities in the setting out of the old work occurred they generally influenced the new. Slight irregularities always occur in setting out a building, even on a clear site, so it is saying great things for the builders of Redcliffe, when, with the exception of the east wall of the presbytery, the whole is set out with mathematical precision.

When enlargements of churches were made necessitating encroachment on the grave-yard, many graves had of necessity to be disturbed and the first thought of the builders was to provide a place for the disposal of the bones. Nearly every church in a populous neighbourhood has, or has had, a bone hole for this purpose and most of the great abbeys had carnaria which consisted of a bone hole under a chapel with priests attached to it for celebrating masses for the repose of the dead.

At Redcliffe, advantage was taken of the drop in the level of the site of the north transept to form a large bone

hole within the foundations which had to be carried down to the lower level.

In consequence of the necessity of such a chamber, it is obvious that the crypt of the north transept was the first part of the new building to be erected, in order to take the bones disturbed by the other work, but the transept was not for the moment built up higher than necessary for making the bone hole.

The first section of the work to be carried to completion was the south transept and this was finished at its north end with a straight joint against the nave and chancel walls of the old church, as can still be traced.

The eastern Lady chapel and the presbytery would then be proceeded with up to the walls of the existing church and even the new columns would be built within the old church, before any appreciable amount of it was taken down. The eastern chapel was at first intended to have been of only one bay in length, but was afterwards extended to the boundary of the churchyard and a procession path provided under the added bay. This alteration appears to have been done during the execution of the works as otherwise it is not possible that the plinths and mouldings generally would have been so faithfully copied.

Work was going on here in 1385 as John Stanes desired to be buried in the new chapel of the church of "Rede-clyve" by the tomb of his late wife Joan and he left 40s. to the fabric if he was allowed sepulchre and only 20s if he was denied. There are two other wills of the same time leaving money to this chapel.¹

As the main span of the church is considerably wider than the transepts, and the springers of the main vaults are level, it was necessary to carry up the walls of the presbytery higher than those of the completed transept.

The north transept was built earlier than the western part of the presbytery as the work could be carried up on

¹ Wadley (Rev. T. P.), *Book of Wills*, Bristol, 1886, p. 14.

the crypt without waiting for the removal of any part of the old church, which is shewn by the similarity of detail to the south transept and the difference from that of the presbytery.

Over the crossing the main walls were continued up in the form of a tower to cover the junction of the steep roofs over the main spans, as was done at Beverley minster and Westminster abbey, but there is no evidence whatever that this was ever intended for a lantern open to the church.

As soon as the presbytery was finished it could then be used for service and the nave could be proceeded with at leisure. At this point the Mayor's Kalendar must again be referred to as it contains under the year 1376 a statement that:—

“ This yere William Canynges builded the bodye of Redclyf Church from the cross Isle downwarde. And soye Church was ffynished as it is nowe.” This is also stated by Dr. Norris to be an insertion of the 17th century and so mere tradition¹; but unlike the story of Burton it may have had some foundation, as building operations were in full swing during the life time of William Canynges the elder.

It is certain however he did not build the nave, but may have contributed to it, like so many others at this time who left legacies in their wills for the fabric of the church.

The south west angle of the old church with its vice was retained in the new work together with the core of the west wall.

It is doubtful if the south aisle begun before the Black Death was ever completed until its turn came in the great remodelling. The upper parts differ considerably from the other aisles, most particularly in the windows being four-centered and fitting the curve of the vaulting.

The whole church is vaulted in stone and the vaults

¹ Dr. Norris, *Redcliff Church*, p. 9.

seem to have been completed with the different sections of the work and not added appreciably later. The vault of the presbytery and nave was provided for from the bases of the piers and each rib is there represented by a bead which follows up the entire vaulting shaft until taken up by the vaulting ribs. The only similar example of this treatment I know is in the Beauchamp chapel at Warwick which was begun about 1440.

Though the great rebuilding could not have been finished much before the end of the fourteenth century we find that the parishioners of Redcliffe were hard at it again by the middle of the next century.

The whole of the clerestory windows of the presbytery, nave and north transept were removed and larger ones, that do not fit the vaults, inserted. The walls inside the presbytery and nave above the arcades were panelled, and externally, above the window arches, the transepts were raised to the same height as the presbytery and nave and all the steep roofs were dropped. The open parapet which surrounds the upper parts of the church seems to have survived from the fourteenth century building. In the raising of the transepts the south transept vault was not interfered with but that in the north transept has been altered next the side walls to jump up over the inserted windows.

The work was in hand during the life-time of William Worcester, that excellent Bristol antiquary, who seems to have spent his time in stepping the sizes of the various great churches he visited and he throws some interesting lights upon this building. The lodgings of the workmen were on Redcliffe Hill and the master mason was named Norton.¹

In 1445 it is stated in Adams's Chronicle that "Redcliffe steeple in Bristoll was thrown down by a thunder clap,

¹ *William Wyrcestre* (Mirror office, 1834), p. 64.

which did much harm also in other places.”¹ This event is also referred to by Worcester, though he does not commit himself to the thunder clap, and he gives the sizes of the tower and spire after the catastrophe occurred.

It is not my intention to give an exhaustive description of the architectural details of this wonderful church but rather to try and point out those features which help to indicate, if only slightly, the appearance of this great church before the Reformation.

The church then consisted, as it does to-day, of an eastern Lady chapel of two bays flanked by two stair turrets; a presbytery of five bays, with aisles; a north transept of three bays, with aisles east and west, over a crypt under the two northern bays; a south transept of similar size; a nave of six bays, with aisles; north and south porches and a great tower, occupying two bays at the west end of the north aisle.

A church open from end to end as Redcliffe is now was unknown, no idea of vistas and other pictorial effects ever entered the minds of the designers. A church was intended for the worship of God and not to form pretty pictures for the artist. So we always find a screen where it was wanted, chapels where they were convenient, monuments where their occupiers fancied, without any consideration being given to what features they might hide or obstruct. Instead of the bare shell we now see, the church was full of screens, furniture, ornaments and colour, on walls and in windows and it is now difficult to imagine the rich and gorgeous effect that the whole produced.

The building allowed for seven altars in chapels formed by the structure but there were probably a great many more. In the great church at Ludlow in Shropshire there were at least eleven chapels formed by screens in the nave alone, and I am convinced if the Bristol walls

¹ Adams's *Chronicle of Bristol*, Bristol, 1910, p. 66.

generally were studied that St. Mary Redcliffe would be found to have contained many more altars than those we now know.

The chapel at the east end is generally known as the Lady chapel and here we have the authority of William Worcester that it was so called in his day. It has been pointed out by my old friend the late Sir William Hope that it is a mistake always to suppose that these eastern chapels were hallowed in honour of Our Lady, especially when the church itself was dedicated to her honour. Probably here, as at Worcester Cathedral, many of the services in connexion with Our Lady were performed at this altar though the altar itself was probably dedicated in honour of some other saint. Nothing remains of the original fittings, even the piscina which must have been in the south wall has been restored away. Across the arch of entrance would have been a screen and this appears to have remained in part until 1709, as Barrett states that before the Queen Anne altar piece was then erected, in the middle of the passage from aisle to aisle was "the entrance at two folding doors into the Lady's chapel."¹

The easternmost bay of the presbytery was left partly open for the Sunday procession and the reredos of the high altar was slightly to the east of the present one. The original reredos reached to above the arcade arches and would be richly panelled with niches containing imagery, like that at Christchurch in Hampshire. The height is shewn by the blocked doorways which led into a gallery that crossed the church at the top of the reredos. This gallery was apparently for easy access to any ornaments or relics which may have been placed there. At St. Mary Redcliffe it was certainly not often necessary to use this gallery as the only means of access, so far as can be seen, was through a hole in the aisle roof.

From the reredos westward the three side arches are

¹ Barrett's *History of Bristol*, p. 574.

filled with open stone screens and there are doorways in the middle ones forming the upper entrances to the quire. There is no doubt the western bay of the presbytery contained the quire stalls, which would have solid screens at the back in line with the open screens in the other bays.

Under the eastern arch of the crossing was the Rood screen, the position of which is confirmed by William Worcester who states that the tower over the crossing was at the west entrance of the chancel.¹ In parish churches the Rood screen was universal and its character was an open screen, generally of wood, with a vaulted coving at the top supporting a loft which had an ornamental parapet towards the church. There was always a staircase of access to the loft from the church but no evidence of it remains here. Old views of the church shew the inner members of the side arches of the crossing stopped about the level of the springer of the arcades, which may indicate the height of the loft. Over the screen was a beam from wall to wall carrying the Rood which always had the supporting figures of Our Lady and St. John on either side.

In connexion with the presbytery must be mentioned the Easter Sepulchre. This feature in the early part of the fourteenth century was an integral part of the structure but by the middle of the century the fashion changed and it then became a moveable piece of furniture. Such was the sepulchre at Redcliffe which is described in a document said to be preserved in the safe but I have not seen it myself. According to Britton it is as follows:—

Item. That Maister Canynge hath deliver'd this 4th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1470, to Maister Nicholas Petters, vicar of St. Mary Redcliffe; Moses Conterin, Philip Barthelmew, procurators of St. Mary Redcliffe, aforesaid; a new sepulchre well gilt with golde, and a civer thereto.

¹ *William Worcester*, (Bristol, 1834), p. 64.

Item, An image of God Almighty rising out of the same sepulchre, with all the ordinance that 'longeth thereto, (that is to say) a lathe made of timber and the iron-work thereto.

Item, Thereto 'longeth Heaven, made of timber and stain'd clothes.

Item, Hell made of timber, and iron-work thereto, with Divels to the number of 13.

Item, 4 Knights armed, keeping the sepulchre, with their weapons in their hands; that is to say, 2 axes and 2 spears with 2 pavés.

Item, 4 payr of Angels' wings for 4 Angels, made of timber and well painted.

Item, The Fadre, the Crowne and Visage, the ball with a Cross upon it, well gilt with fine gould.

Item, The Holy Ghosht coming out of Heaven into the sepulchre.

Item, Longeth to the 4 Angels 4 Chevelers.¹

In front of the High Altar are two large slabs containing brasses.

The northern marks the resting place of John Brook and Johanna his wife, of whom the former died on Christmas day, 1521. At each corner of the slab was a shield of arms and in the centre the figures of a man and woman under which is a long inscription.

The southern has badges at the corners, and under canopies the figures of a man and woman with fourteen children and an inscription to John Jay and Johanna his wife, who was a sister of William Worcester. He died 1480 and willed to be buried in the quire of Redcliffe church for which he gave 20s.²

The aisles of the presbytery were merely procession paths but at the east end of each were chapels. That on the north contained the altar of St. Stephen and was the Chantry of the Mede family.

¹ *Redcliffe Church*, by John Britton (Lond. 1813), p. 27.

² *Bristol Wills*, p. 142.

The chapel would be surrounded by screens across the aisle and under the easternmost arch of the presbytery; both screens must have had doorways to enable the Sunday procession to pass.

The whole of the north side of the chapel is occupied by a very fine monument consisting of two deep recesses under a richly panelled canopy. The western recess contains effigies of Thomas Mede and his wife with an imperfect label of brass along the edge of the pedestal recording that he died on the 20th day of December, 1475. His will is not among those registered at Bristol but he seems to have founded a perpetual chantry at the altar of this chapel. The eastern recess has no effigies but has at the back a brass with the figures of a man and woman and had a brass plate beneath for the inscription which has gone. It is reputed to commemorate Philip, Thomas Mede's brother, who directs in his will that his body be buried by the altar of St. Stephen the Martyr in Redcliffe Church to the fabric of which church he left a pipe of woad.¹

Mede's chantry was one of the four that remained in this church at the suppression of chantries and the last priest was Bernard Ferris who had a pension of £5.²

The corresponding chapel at the east end of the south aisle is said to have contained the altar of St. Nicholas but I can find no authority for this. In 1401 Walter Newcombe "directed to be buried at Redeclyve in the chapel of St. Nicholas" and in 1418 his wife Alice desired "to be buried in the chapel of St. Nicholas within the church of the Blessed Mary of Redcliff."³

Opposite the upper entrance of the quire on the north side is the entrance to the vestry, of the same date as the aisle. This entrance is figured by Britton and the

¹ *Bristol Wills*, p. 157.

² *Mitred Abbeyes*, by Browne Willis, ii, p. 88.

³ *Bristol Wills*, pp. 68 and 101.

present work seems to be a copy of the original; over the door are two niches with panelled pedestals but the canopies have not been restored. The vestry has a piscina in the south wall and would have had an altar against the east side. The window over the altar has pateræ in the hollows of the jambs and mullions and contains some 15th century glass much defaced. In the north wall is said to have been a fireplace but it is not likely to have been original and is now destroyed by a staircase to the crypt formed in the thickness of the wall. In the south west angle is a vice to a room above, which has an original fireplace in the north wall but no indication of it being a dwelling for a priest as so often stated. There is a small quatrefoiled squint into the aisle. The vice is continued upwards to the leads of the aisle roof.

Under the vestry is a vaulted chamber which has not been restored but there is no indication of how it was originally entered, or what was its use.

Between the vestry and the transept is a room added later to enlarge the vestry and the three-light window in the north wall contains some old glass. In the western light is a masted ship containing seven ladies which may be part of a picture of St. Ursula. In the middle light is the figure of a dove and two angels playing on musical instruments belonging to a Trinity and in the eastern light a fragment of a figure of St. Blaise, with a wool comb, and beneath a merchant's badge on a shield.

At the present time there are stone screens, similar to those on each side the presbytery, across the aisles in line with the east wall of the transept aisles but they are not in their original position and are not shewn on Britton's plan. They seem ancient and were possibly removed from the transept arcade where they would have formed entrances into the presbytery aisles.

The eastern aisles of the transepts were occupied by chapels, two on each side. Those on the north side are

said to have been hallowed in honour of St. Blaise and All Souls; they would be separated by screens and have a fence screen in the arches of the transept but no indication of either remain in the piers, which have been made all new. The altars were raised at least two steps above the transept floor as indicated by the height of the squint, pointing to the High Altar, above the ground.

In 1408, Robert Bonce desired to be buried in the church of the blessed Mary of Redcliff, before the altar of St. Blaise, by the grave of son John. He left 33s. 4d. to the work of the Church and willed for a fit priest to celebrate at the altar for the good of his soul for two years at eight marks a year.¹

In the northern chapel is now placed the earliest monument in the church, being the effigy of a knight in chain mail with crossed legs. In 1812 it was against the west wall of the transept.²

Barrett records that:—

“About the middle of the cross aisle was buried Everard le Fraunces. Over him is a plain altar tomb, with his figure in the robes of a magistrate, and formerly the following inscription:—

“Hic jacet Everardus le French qui in hac ecclesiâ duas fundavit cantarias et duas alias in ecclesiâ St. Nicolai, et fuit ter maior hujus villae cujus animae propitietur Deus, Amen. M.CCCL.”³

Britton also records this tomb but as he does not shew it on his plan of the church, it had gone from its original position before his time. Personally I am inclined to think the monument referred to is the effigy now at the south end of the west aisle of the south transept.

Everard le French certainly did found a chantry, if not two in this church, but it is not known at which altar and

¹ *Bristol Wills*, p. 105.

² Britton, *Redcliffe Church*, ground plan.

³ Barrett's *Bristol*, p. 583.

the position of his monument throws no light on the subject. This chantry was one of the four that remained at the suppression of chantries and the priest was William Bonner who had a pension of £5.¹

Another chantry which remained to the suppression was Chaney's chantry the site of which cannot be identified and the last priest was John Bradle who also had a pension of £5.²

There were two chapels in the east aisle of the south transept, but here also all evidence of screens and altars has been destroyed. The southern chapel was hallowed in honour of St. Katherine and the northern in honour of St. George.

William Canynges, whom William Worcester styles "a most wealthy and most wise merchant of the city of Bristol, Dean of the church of Westbury, died on the 17th day of November, A.D., 1474 and was in the order of priesthood seven years and had been five times Mayor of the said city and was elected to represent the said city in parliament,"³ founded perpetual chantries at both altars during his lifetime. He built a lodging for the priests at the western extremity of the churchyard. This house was 20 or 19 yards in length with bay windows of freestone for the chambers of the four priests.⁴ Canynges mentions only two chantry priests in his will, namely, Peter Lambs serving at the altar of St. Katherine to whom and his successors he left his best suit of vestments of velvet, and Thomas Hawcook serving at the altar of St. George to whom and his successors he left a suit of vestments of damask *blodii coloris*. He also left two books for use in the quire for his priests, one on one side and one on the other. At the suppression of chantries there was only one priest attached to Canynges' Chantries, William Moses

¹ Willis, *Abbies*, ii, p. 88.

² *Ibid.*

³ *William Wyrcestre*, pp. 123-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

who had a pension of £5.¹ Canynges' will is dated 12th November, 1474, and he desires to be buried in the place which he had constructed on the south side of the church by the altar of St. Katherine where the body of his late wife Joan was buried.² Outside the chapel against the south wall of the transept is an altar tomb, with an arched canopy above, upon which were the effigies of a man and woman. I see no reason to suppose they were not in their original position and it is a pity they have been removed into the 14th century recesses in the south aisle of the nave.

The reputed effigy of Canynges, as dean of Westbury, on the south side of the chapel, is said to have been brought from that place.

Two interesting grave slabs remain in the floor of this transept. The one in the middle of the west aisle has a knife and colender roughly cut upon it and inscribed.

Hic jacet Willm' Coke quondam servitas Willmī Canynges mercatoris ville Bristoll cui' aīe ppicietur deus amen.

The other is under the first arch of the west arcade and bears a large incised cross with the inscription running round the edge.

✠ Hic jacet Johēs Blecker señ pandoxator cuius aīe propicietur deus amen ✠ Hic jacent Ricardus Coke et Tibota ux' eius (quorum aībus) ppicietur deus amen.

The lettering still retains its lead filling and the slab was appropriated in 1716 by one Stritch.

The nave was that part of the church set apart for the worshippers though it may have contained small chantries. Britton's and other early prints shew the inner members of the first pair of pillars on either side to have been cut away and this may indicate that there was a small altar against each pier surrounded by a fence screen to form a small chapel.

¹ Willis, *Abbies*, ii, p. 88.

² Wadley's *Bristol Wills*, p. 151.

The font was against the pillar on the south, the inner moulding being finished with a corbel above it.

A John Frensshe died in 1398 and desired to be buried by his wife Julia next the Holy font. He also left money to a chantry priest to celebrate masses for the repose of his soul and those of his two wives.

Under the tower was probably an altar with a fence screen around it. At the restoration of the church the arch carrying the south wall was destroyed and a new arch made of much smaller size, but fortunately the original label mould was left towards the tower which shows the size of the original arch. The windows were also altered by the insertion of new tracery in the upper parts and are now filled with fragments of old glass. The north window is entirely filled with bits of glass of various dates but the west window has two tiers of figures less fragmentary. The upper row beginning at the south consists of:—

1. A bishop in mass vestments in the act of blessing.
2. Our Lady with the Holy Child on her right arm and a sceptre in the left hand.
3. An archbishop holding the cross staff and vested in the pallium.
4. St. Lawrence holding a book in the right hand and the grid iron in the left.

The lower row consists of

1. St. George slaying the dragon with a short sword.
2. St. Matthias holding a long handled axe.
3. St. John Baptist with a book and Agnus Dei.
4. Made up of two fragments, the upper part being the head and shoulders of Our Lady and Child; the lower part being the remains of a fine figure of the Trinity, which consisted of a seated figure of God the Father supporting the Son on the cross between the knees. The descending Dove and angels in the room behind the vestry may have belonged to this group.

The original doorway to the stair to the upper part of the tower remains blocked up in the north east angle.

The north porch must now be considered. The relics of Our Lady, for which the porch was built, were kept in the small chamber on the south west side, the front of which is protected with iron gratings.

William Worcester gives valuable information about this porch, which was a chapel in his time.

“ The length of the first porch entrance of the church of the blessed Mary contains 7 yards and the chapel in continuation to the door of entry with the principal church contains 6 yards. The breadth of the said chapel contains 5 yards.

The principal chapel of St. Mary with the statues of the Kings skilfully wrought in freestone contains in circumference forty-four yards with the doorway of entrance skilfully wrought.

The length of the principal porch where the holy and blessed Virgin is venerated contains 12 yards, its width contains 6 yards.”¹

The arrangement of the chapel combined with the porch is not easy to imagine. The outer porch was given up to the passage of pilgrims before the relic and the passage of worshippers into the church. At first sight it would seem that when the porch was made into a chapel the passage into the church was blocked up, but this is shewn by Worcester not to have been the case as he mentions the door of entrance into the church. In one paragraph he fortunately differentiates the porch from the chapel, which clearly shews that the inner porch contained the altar which must have stood against the east wall.

In 1464 Lodowic Mors willed to be buried in the porch of the blessed Mary of Redcliff before the image of the blessed Mary in the same² and again in 1491 Maud Ester-

¹ *William Wyrcestre*, p. 204.

² *Bristol Wills*, p. 138.

feld left a ring of gold to the use of the chapel of the blessed Mary situated in the porch of the parish church of the blessed Mary of Redcliff.¹

The exact position of this important image is not known, but it must without much doubt have stood above the relic chamber on the south west side of the porch and for the ease of access to the image the wall passage was made round the porch.

A still further reference to the image of Our Lady occurs in the will of William Canynges when he leaves 20s. to the keeper of the box for oblations at the north door.

A vice of the same date as the outer porch is on the eastern side of the inner porch and leads to a room above the latter. This room has the original window in the north wall and had a steep pitched roof which remained after the tower was built. The upper part of the wall of the north aisle is carried upon a wide construction arch across the south end of the room. There does not seem to have been a fireplace, but in the south east angle is a small wardrobe added in the fifteenth century. The vice continues up to a large room over the outer porch which Barratt says was formerly "The Treasury House,"² and still retains the original doors at the top of the stairs. It was in this room that Chatterton carried on his ingenious work that so deceived the excellent Barrett and has caused so much trouble in gleaning fact from fancy which surrounds the story of this church.

The south porch has a parvise above the fifteenth century remodelling and Barrett says it was "a handsome room wainscoted having a chimney in it, on each side of which are cupboards for keeping the church writings, this being the place where the churchwardens and vestry-men of the parish now meet to transact business."³ Old views of the

¹ *Bristol Wills*, p. 177.

² Barrett's *Bristol*, p. 576.

³ *Ibid*, p. 576.

ST. MARY REDCLIFFE, BRISTOL.

By HAROLD BRAKSPEAR, F.S.A.

(WITH PLAN).

AS the late Dr. Norris aptly remarks at the beginning of his small book on Redcliffe Church.¹

“ Record in stone, record in writings—these are the two sources of information to which the student of Church architecture looks hopefully. If both are truthful and trustworthy, all is well. But how if one or both be untruthful and untrustworthy? What is he then to do? ”

Anyone trying to elucidate the history of this noble building is met at all points by ridiculous statements of no authority whatever and when he turns to the building itself, expecting it to tell its own tale, he finds every inch of masonry has either been renewed or scraped beyond recognition. The written fables can be rejected for what they are worth, but the wholesale destruction of the building inside and out cannot be passed over with equal equanimity. Words cannot express the feeling of indignation at the useless desecration that has been perpetrated in the cause of so called restoration, even fifty years after the mischief has been done.

There was a great church at Redcliffe in the twelfth century, but when it was begun is impossible now to say. The east end would be the first part to be erected and the whole would be carried on slowly to the west end. The north porch of this church fortunately remains almost intact and it certainly is not a day later than 1190. The side walls are panelled with pointed arches resting on detached columns having carved capitals with square

¹ Norris (Dr. J. P.), *Church of St. Mary, Redcliffe*. Bristol, 1882.

church shew that it was gained from the south aisle by a large added staircase on the east side.

Under the north transept, as before stated, is a large crypt or bonehole originally entered by a small doorway and descending stair from the north aisle of the nave, which is now blocked.

There was probably an altar at the east end attached to which would be the Fraternity of the Commemoration of Souls mentioned in William Canynges' will. The southern part of the crypt would be allotted to the storage of the bones.

In conclusion I wish to tender my heartiest thanks to Mr. G. H. Oatley, the architect to the Vestry, for having the excellent ground plan prepared in his office and without which it would have been a hard task to write this paper. To the Vicar and Vestry for allowing the plan to be made. To Mr. Sefton Clarke for kindly meeting me at the church and allowing me to inspect the interesting documents in his charge and to Mr. J. E. Pritchard, F.S.A. for much assistance in preparing this paper.