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Teddington Church, Worcestershire

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TEDDINGTON CHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE

in which are structural fragments from Hayles Abbey

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TEDDINGTON is within half a mile of the Cheltenham-Evesham road, and the same distance from the cross-roads known as Teddington Hands. It lies just without the border of Gloucestershire.

The church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, is a modest structure comprising a nave 37 ft. 3 ins. by 20 ft. 4 ins., and chancel 20 ft. 2 ins. by 13 ft. 9 ins., whose details are of simple character though not devoid of interest, to which was added in the 16th century a western tower. Incorporated in the tower are some beautiful 13th century fragments.

The purpose of these notes (although there is no vestige of the abbey church visible above ground) is to establish the fact that the 13th century fragments were obtained from Hayles abbey, and to indicate to the antiquary who would visualize something of the beauty of Hayles that he may do so by visiting Teddington church.

The nave and chancel (fig. 2), have been considerably, if not entirely, rebuilt, except the wall dividing the nave and chancel, and that has not wholly escaped.

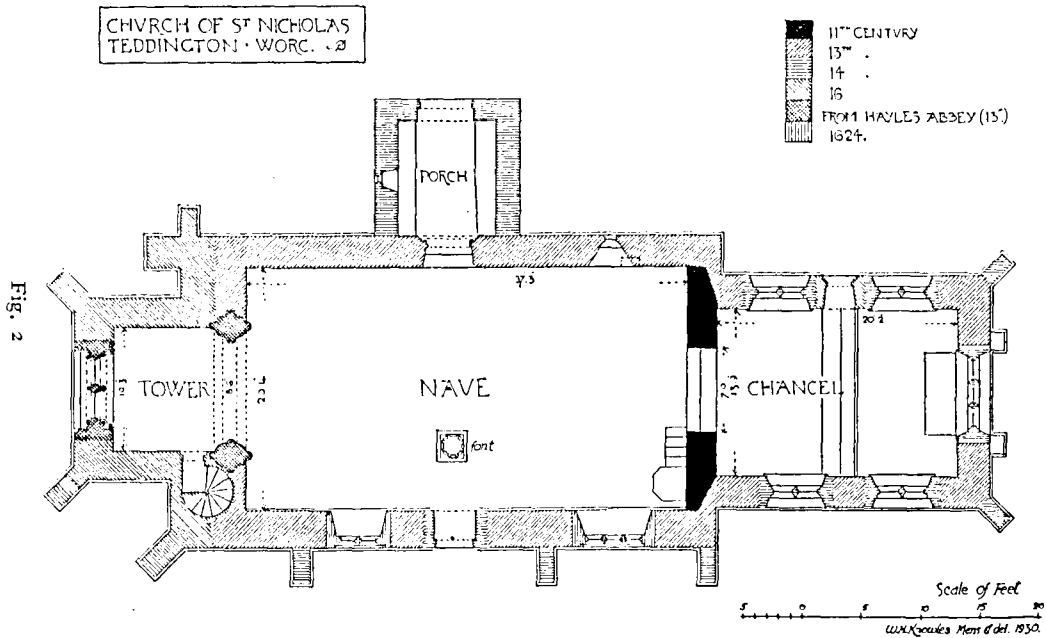
The chancel arch (fig. 3) erected in the 11th century is the earliest existing feature in the church; it is 7 ft. wide, in a wall 2 ft. 6 ins. thick. It has plain jambs of large stones the thickness of the wall, a square impost 5¼ ins. deep, projecting 3 ins., and over it a semicircular arch with rough voussoirs irregular on the extrados. A few of them are the width of the soffit. The jambs may not have been rebuilt, but the walling on both sides of



facing p. 93

Fig. 1. TEDDINGTON CHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE :
VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

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the jambs and the gable over the arch have obviously suffered restoration, inasmuch as they embody re-used arch stones with a double cable, connected lozenges and star ornaments of the 12th century.

The early chancel arch occasions enquiry as to the extent of the church of which it formed part. Possibly the nave walls are on the foundations of this church, and the side walls of the chancel, but not the east gable which with greater probability represents an eastern extension.

Both nave and chancel are faced with irregular coursed rubble and presumably of one build; just when this occurred it is difficult to say. The nave walls are 2 ft. 10 ins. in thickness and on the north side is a window with a trefoiled head, and a door with a pointed arched head formed with a large mid 12th century roll moulding continued down the jambs, within a 13th century hood moulding terminating on the east on a head stop, and on the west side on a re-used 12th century beast, resembling the work at Bishops Cleeve. These two features seem to indicate the 13th century as the period of reconstruction. Then also the numerous arch stones, probably the outer order of the Norman north door, were appropriated and used as building material in the wall about the chancel arch. Two dwarf buttresses below the sill of the east window are also of the same date.

Again, during the 14th century, restoration was effected, when the south walls of the nave appear to have been largely reconstructed. On the interior, at 3 ft. above the floor level, is a meaningless plinth, and on the exterior the wall has been refaced with stones dressed with greater care than on the north side. At the time three buttresses were added to strengthen the wall, and the south door erected. The latter has a pointed arched head formed in two stones within a chamfered hood moulding.

The chancel also received attention when the traceried east window of three trefoil ogee lights was inserted (the only feature of any architectural merit in either nave or chancel) and the diagonal buttresses added to strengthen the east gable. The four two-light square-headed windows in the side walls have jambs and mullions of the same section as the east window, but conceivably lost their tracery at a subsequent restoration, the present head stones being clumsy and ill-fitting (fig. 1).

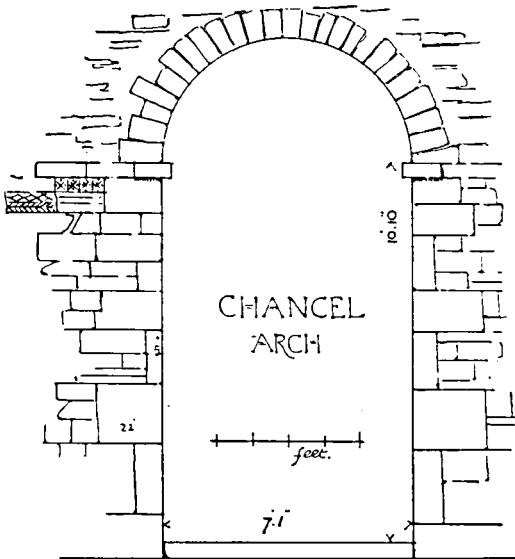


Fig. 3. Elevation of chancel arch

The porch is an addition of the period, the pointed arch of its chamfered and rebated door being formed in four large stones.

A small door in the north wall of the chancel with a flat three-centred arch whose mouldings continued down the jambs is a 15th century insertion. The windows in

the nave south wall (fig. 1) are square-headed with a hood moulding returned at the ends. The lights are elliptical-headed and in the spandrils of the easternmost window is carved the date A.D. 1624, the figures 2 and 4 being reversed.

The bowl of the font is modern but the base and circular shaft of 14th century workmanship. On the shaft are attached eight small shafts and between them are carved ball flowers; it is similar in design to that at Tewkesbury where the font is complete with moulded bases and capitals which follow the circular plan of the shafts.

The roof of the nave is ancient. The seat-ends have well moulded top rails of the 15th-16th century. The pulpit, slightly altered, bears the date 1655 and the names of the churchwardens Michael Tyller and William A. Woode. On a panel of a made-up priest's stall is inscribed, 'Quench not ye spirit, Despise not prophecying', and on the seat 'pray continually'. In the windows on the north side of the chancel are a few fragments of 15th century stained glass, and on the south nave wall a large and important painting of the Royal Arms of William and Mary, enclosed with draped architectural features. There are two bells, one dated 1605 the other 1609. The silver chalice and paten bear the hall-mark for 1571.

We are spared speculation as to the date of the tower, the builder having considerably inscribed A.D. 1567 on the cornice of the parapet. It is of three receding stages, with poor two-light belfry windows, a battlemented parapet and angle gargoyles. At the ground level (fig. 2) the nave west gable has been considerably strengthened by increasing its thickness and by the addition of substantial buttresses. A circular stair entered by a low four-centred door has been contrived at the southwest angle of the nave.

The surprising features in the lower stage of the tower (fig. 2) is the extraordinary combination of re-used

masonry which belongs to the second half of the 13th century and which has been clumsily fitted to the position. These are an arch of two finely moulded orders springing from responds of clustered shafts (fig. 4) and in the west wall a beautiful two-light traceried window (fig. 5).

The responds (fig. 4) are really clustered piers partially built in (fig. 6) consisting of attached shafts, two larger

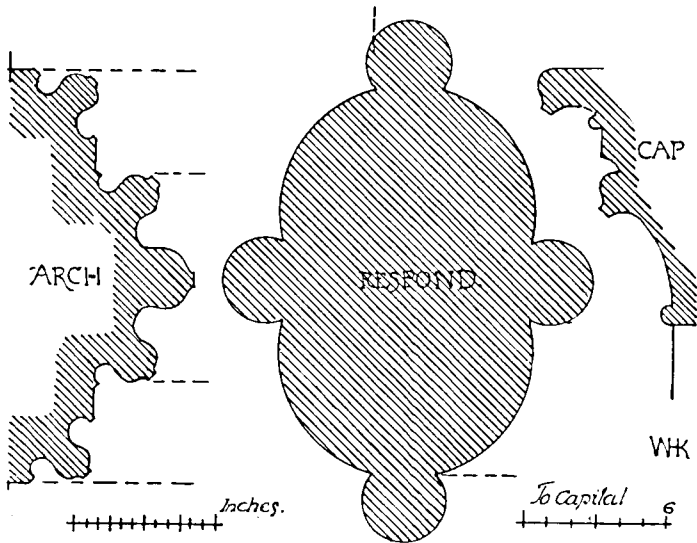


Fig. 6. Tower arch: section of responds and arch

and four smaller, one on each face. On the bed they measure 3 ft. 8 ins., which is greater than the thickness of the wall of which they form part. The capitals (fig. 6) are finely moulded and follow the plan of the pier. There is no base moulding and to the top of the capitals the responds are 11 ft. 3 ins. in height. Springing from the capitals is an arch of two finely moulded orders of less width than the responds. The window (fig. 5)

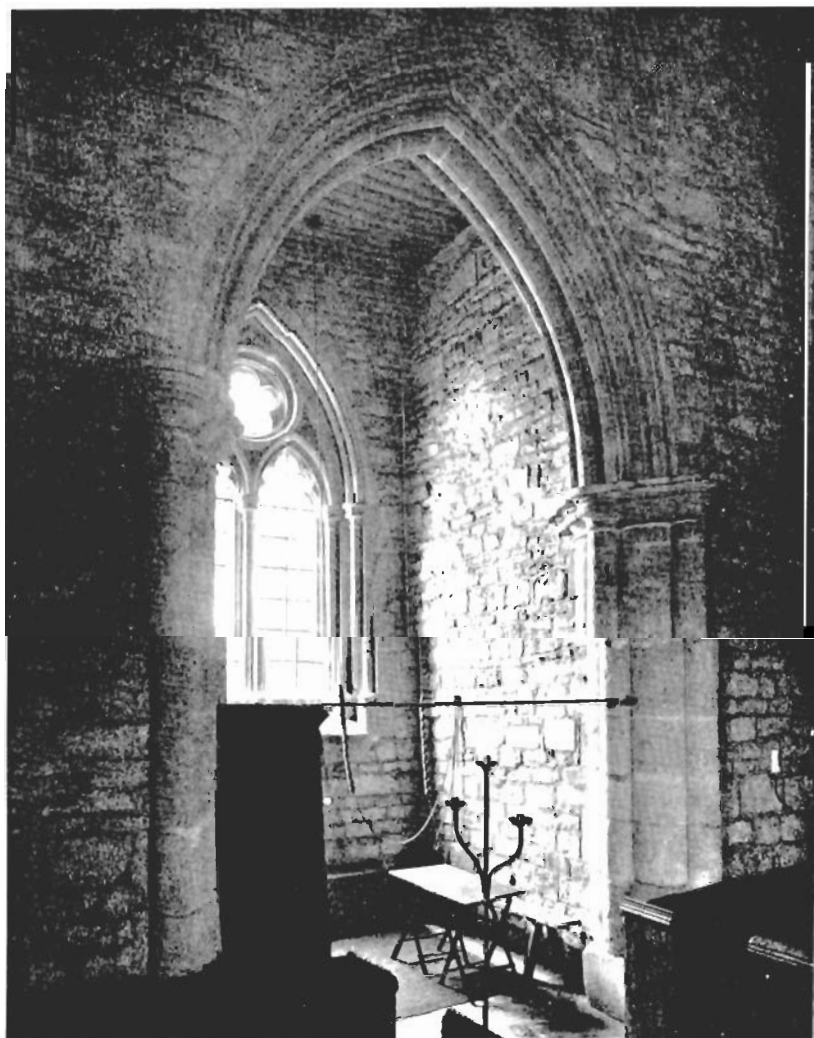


Fig. 4. TEDDINGTON CHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE :
THE TOWER ARCH
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PLATE III

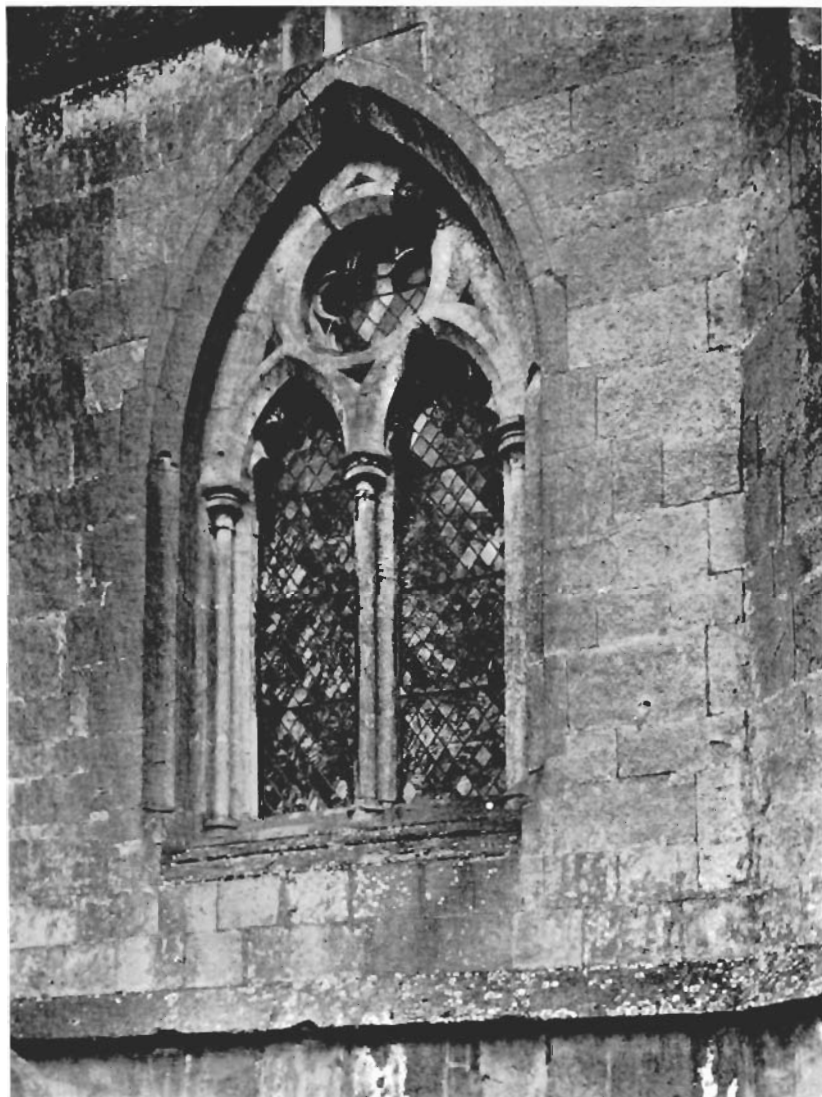


Fig. 5. TEDDINGTON CHURCH, WORCESTERSHIRE :
THE WEST WINDOW

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is a beautiful example of late Early English work of two lights, each 2 ft. in width, with cinquefoiled heads above which is a richly moulded and cusped circle. The jambs (fig. 7) are shafted and moulded, and have delicately cut capitals and bases. On the interior the cusped pointed heads and the containing arch are richly moulded ; on the exterior they are chamfered only.

The striking character and proportions of both arch and windows pertain to a building exceeding the dimensions of a modest country church. To identify the source

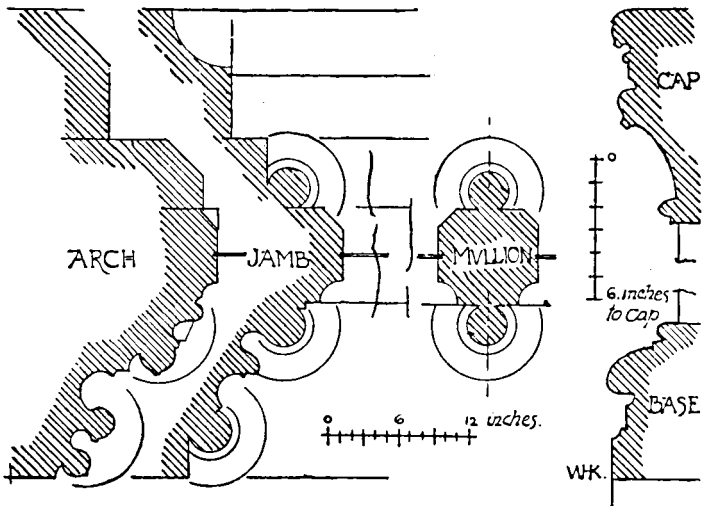


Fig. 7. Details of west window

from which they were obtained it will be necessary to recall the facts as to the foundation of Hayles abbey, only seven miles distant, and to examine the reports of the excavations made there in 1899-1900.

The Cistercian abbey of Hayles was a daughter house of Beaulieu, and was founded in 1246 by Richard Earl of Cornwall upon a site in his manor of Hayles, near

Winchcombe in the county of Gloucestershire. In 1251 the church, cloisters, dorter, and frater were finished at the sole cost of the founder and the church was dedicated on 5 November of that year.

In 1270 Edmund Earl of Cornwall, son of the founder, gave to Hayles a portion of a relic which had been authenticated as some of the Blood of Christ. Following the acquisition of this relic, an apse with ambulatory and radiating chapels was added to the original east end, to receive the shrine, and this new work was dedicated in 1277.¹

Of the buildings portions only of the claustral range now remain above ground. Of the church, excepting the aisle south wall adjoining the cloisters, there are no visible remains.

During 1899 excavations were made by Canon Bazeley, with whom Mr St. Clair Baddeley was associated, on the site of the conventual buildings and during the following year on the church,² of which sufficient was found to enable Mr (now Sir) Harold Brakspear to reconstruct its plan.³ Thereon it is shown that the main arcade of the apse had clustered piers of the section (fig. 8) indicated on Mr Brakspear's sheet of details,⁴ which was proved by the discovery of the lowest course and part

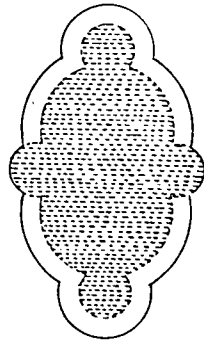


Fig. 8

Pier of apse Hayles abbey

¹ *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, II, 96.

² *Trans. B.G.A.S.* xxii, 257-71, also St. Clair Baddeley's *Cotteswold Shrine*.

³ *Arch. Journ.*, LVIII, 356.

⁴ *Ibid.* pl. II, fig. 4.

of the base of one of the piers towards the southeast.⁵

We have seen that the apsidal termination to the church to receive the shrine of the holy Blood of Christ was erected 1270-7, with which the Teddington details in point of date are consistent. The section of the pier (fig. 8) is identical with that re-used at Teddington (fig. 6). On the site are arch mouldings and capitals of similar section to those indicated on fig. 6 and corresponding fragments of window cusping. The span of the arch at Teddington is about the same as those of the apse arcade; the arches of the nave arcade are considerably wider.

We are grateful to the good people of the 16th century who adorned their hamlet church with a few borrowed plumes from Hayles, appropriated within thirty years of the suppression of the abbey. They were doubtless proud of the added beauty the fragments gave to the rude church they worshipped in.

I am indebted to the Rev. J. H. O'Connor, an enthusiastic archaeologist, who first invited me to visit his church, thereby exciting my interest in the 13th century features embodied in its 16th century tower, which led me to investigate the source from which the fragments were obtained.

⁵ *Arch. Journ.* LVIII, 355.