



# Archæologia Cantiana.

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## ANCIENT STAINED GLASS IN WESTBERE CHURCH.

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IN the autumn of 1884, upon commencing the reparation of Westbere Church, a parcel of old stained glass was found, wrapped in paper, lying on the top of the wall of the vestry, where the roof rests upon it. The Rector, the Rev. John Henry Hughes-Hallett, caused it to be placed in a box, and conveyed to his house. When I heard of this, in the summer of 1886, my eager request to inspect the contents was complied with, and I was gratified to find that the box was filled with fragments of ancient glass, of the date of the middle of the fourteenth century. Willing hands speedily set to work to remove the accumulated dust of centuries and the cobwebs of more recent years, whereupon the richness of colour and the beauty of the patterns soon became apparent.

That the fragments did indeed come from the church was soon evident, since many of the patterns are similar to those on fragments which still exist in the sacred building; all of which, I need scarcely say, have been very carefully preserved during our recent works.

It is fortunate that some diligent hand preserved

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these fragments when certain repairs were done, about thirty years ago, although it is a pity that they were hidden from view. Still their preservation must be matter for congratulation, since at the period named there was far more chance of their being given away or destroyed.

The subjects are all curious; and since glass of the early date of these specimens is not common, the patterns are worthy of attention. There are fragments of two or three rather large figures; of several smaller ones, and of angels; of a curious roundel; and of many architectural patterns of canopies, panelling, and the like. One of these, a series of upright quatrefoils, is identical in pattern with some decoration in red, but on a larger scale, of which traces were found on the walls of the chancel. This pattern has been carefully reproduced in the new work. It suggests an enquiry whether the artists who designed the glass did not also design the coloured patterns on the walls. There was not sufficient of any of the fragments to enable a pattern to be made up, but in order that they might be preserved, and brought back into the building to which they belong, I have had them leaded up, after the fashion of the patterns seen in a kaleidoscope, and they have been fixed in a window of the nave on the north side.

Westbere Church consists of a large wide nave and a long chancel; and is a large church for so simple a place. The chancel inclines visibly to the north. To a casual observer the building would appear to be wholly of the Decorated Style of the middle of the fourteenth century, there being several good windows of that period, filled with capital Kentish tracery; the east window being a remark-

ably fine specimen. Internally, there are good triple sedilia and a piscina; the chancel arch is supported by crouching figures of large size, forming corbels. Their faces, and many of the dripstone terminations to the windows, are carved with features so remarkably life-like as to warrant the belief that they are actually portraits of some personages whose names are now forgotten. A closer inspection will shew that the walls of the chancel are of much greater antiquity than any of the fourteenth century architectural features, all of which are insertions. The progress of the recent works revealed the same interesting evidences with respect to the walls of the nave, which are, however, covered with recent flint work. The existence of the early plan, already alluded to, is accounted for by the fact, thus ascertained, that the church is of more ancient date than its Decorated features would suggest. It is dedicated to All Saints.

The recent operations have consisted entirely of works of repair, and no attempt has been made to substitute new work for ancient. The building is now beautified by a fine series of stained-glass windows, on the south side, presented by the late Mr. Thomas Scott, of London, as a memorial to his wife. The large west window has been filled in with a remarkable composition, in stained glass, commemorative of All Saints, presented by a sister-in-law of the Rector.

The accompanying plate represents the most interesting of the fragments discovered. They are rather more than one-third the natural size. The colours are mainly red, of great intensity, blue, yellow, green, and brown.