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THE PARISH CHURCH OF CLIFFE AT HOO.

*A Paper read therein before the Kent Archæological Society on
July 26th, 1876,*

BY THE REV. IORWERTH GREY LLOYD, M.A.

THE name of this parish was anciently Clyva, Cleve, or Bishop's Cleve; afterwards West Cliff, and Clyff, or Clyffe in the seventeenth century, as in the map of Kent in Philipott's book *Kent Surveyed*; and now the name generally given to the place is Cliffe-at-Hoo. Although the parish is not actually within the Hundred of Hoo, it is thus designated to distinguish it from others of the same name.

The Church is dedicated in honour of St. Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great, a personage chiefly remarkable on account of the legend, which represents her as the discoverer of the actual Cross upon which the Saviour suffered.

The Church which stood on the site of the present building, and which has entirely perished, with the exception possibly of a very rude and ancient doorway, still to be seen in the exterior of the north wall of the north Chapel, was, with some other buildings (to which it may be reasonably conjectured this doorway led, but which have also perished),* the place where the seven Anglo-Saxon Councils were held, viz.:—Cloveshoo or Cloveshoe in A.D. 742, 747, 798, 800, 803, 823, and 824. The Canons passed at the Council of the year 747 are worthy of attention; one of them, the ninth, enjoining residence on the Clergy in their respective parishes, has been forgotten here, the present Rector being the first for fully a century, who has been properly resident upon the benefice.

Other places, it is true, claim to have been the scene of

* There is a raised space in the churchyard immediately opposite to this doorway, which would seem to mark the site of some building, and it has been asserted that there are foundations there.

these Councils, but when the position of Cliffe is considered, geographically and ecclesiastically, being readily accessible by river and sea communication from all parts of England, and not so very far distant from the Metropolitan City of Canterbury, it would seem to have as good, if not a better, claim than Abingdon, or Chelsea, to be the place where these assemblies were held. Besides this *à priori* argument in favour of the supposition, there is also more or less indirect evidence in its favour to be derived from the fact that the Rectory of Cliffe* was for many centuries an Exempt Jurisdiction, the Rectors having been their own Ordinaries, only visitable by the Archbishop of Canterbury in person.†

The present Church is faced with Kentish rag and flint in alternate courses; some Reigate stone appears also, and the materials seem to have been used more than once before. The fabric consists of western tower, nave, north and south aisles, south porch, north and south chapels built transept-wise, and chancel; the whole forming a cruciform plan. Its extreme dimensions are, from east to west 149 feet, and from north to south, across the transepts, 82 feet. The tower, nave, and transepts are Early English, and are said to have been built about the year 1260. The chancel is thought to have been rebuilt, and several "Decorated" windows inserted in the nave aisles, during the time of Archbishop Whittlesey, who about the year 1350 was Rector of Cliffe. One solitary beam, with pierced spandrels, in the nave, is exactly like the tie-beams of the roof erected in Cooling Church during the reign of Edward III. Its insertion was probably needed when the nave aisles were widened at this time. In the south aisle an arch, inserted within the Early English arcading upon the west wall of the south transept, may be of this or of rather later date. The arms of Archbishop Arundel, upon the ancient chancel roof (which has been unhappily demolished, together with the east window), would seem to suggest for that roof

* In ancient times there was a perpetual vicarage as well as a rectory belonging to this church, but when the vicarage was merged into the rectory is uncertain. The Vicarage House, which was probably built of timber and plaster, was pulled down shortly after the Restoration. Two fields belonging to the glebe still go by the name of the Vicarage field and marsh.

† This Jurisdiction was taken away by two "Orders in Council," dated respectively August 8, and December 23, 1845.



CLIFFE AT HOO, CHURCH OF ST. HELEN.

likewise a somewhat later date. He occupied the See from 1396 to 1414.

The tower was repaired, and its staircase rebuilt, a few years ago. In 1857, when Sir Stephen Glynne visited this Church, the bells had been taken down to be recast, and he saw them lying on the ground within the tower. In 1862 they were recast, by John Taylor and Co., of Loughborough; and, in 1864, two more were added from the same foundry. The tower now contains a peal of eight musical bells, and the ringing chamber is approached by a newel staircase. There is a rude external doorway to be observed on the south side of the tower. The south porch has a parvise or room over it, by no means an uncommon arrangement. Here the parvise is not, as yet, put to any practical use; but in some places it is used as a vestry or as a library. The floor of the parvise and the turret stairs leading to it have been recently restored, but the turret itself still needs restoration. There are some masons' marks to be seen on the outside arch of the porch. The nave (of which the declination of its floor to the north is remarkable) was re-seated with open seats two years ago. The font, which was removed some years since from its accustomed place, has an octagonal bowl, with concave sides, on a buttressed stem. An iron bracket in the western pillar of the south arcade of the nave, from which the font cover was suspended, remains to mark its original position. The nave arcades consist each of five Early English arches, which spring from circular columns having moulded capitals and bases. Over each column of the two arcades there is a clerestory lancet window, well splayed.

The transepts were originally uniformly decorated with bold arcading, and enriched with paintings. On their east and on their western walls, were two large Early English blind-arches, well moulded, on slender banded shafts with moulded caps and bases. In the middle of each of these wall-arches was a large, single, lancet window. On each side of these windows, and above them, the wall was decorated with paintings, which filled the wide spaces intervening between each window and the arch in which it stood. Some of these paintings still remain, but their colours are sometimes more, some-

times less vivid, varying according to some unknown atmospheric conditions.

In the south transept* the painting on the east wall, south of the southernmost window, represents the Last Judgment. The subject is boldly treated, in five series of figures. At the top we see the Saviour in Majesty, seated upon a rainbow; below Him the angelic host; beneath them the Resurrection of the Just; lower still the Unjust appear, with an avenging angel, sword in hand, in their midst, and beneath them gape the jaws of hell. On the north side of this window the subjects cannot so clearly be seen; one seems to be such a scene as that of David beheading Goliath.

In both transepts one arch of the arcading on the west wall was broken into when the nave aisles were widened, but in both cases the original Early English wall-arch was preserved, and the apex of the original lancet window still remains *in situ*. Beneath them was inserted in each case an arch which opened into the extra width of the aisle. In the north transept this open arch is small and does not descend to the ground; in the south transept the arch is larger, it is open to the ground, and has disfigured the original arrangement much more.

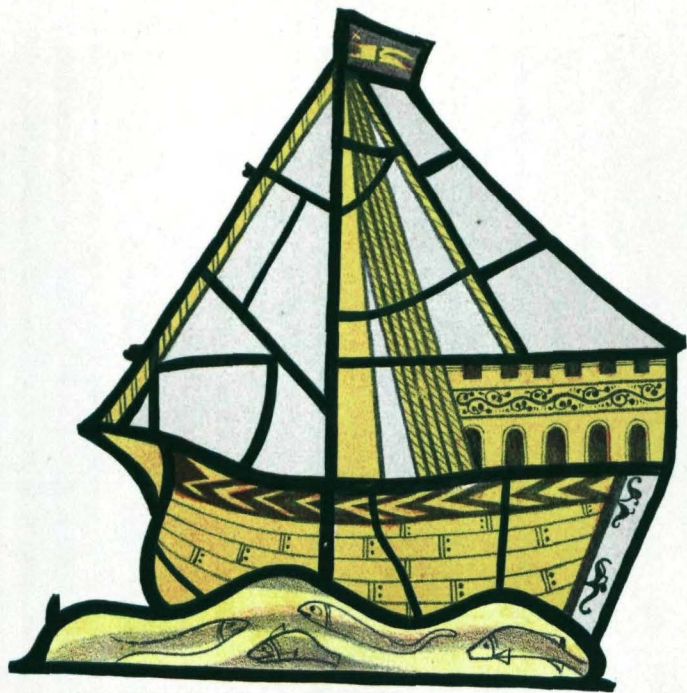
In the north transept we see, above the most southern window in its east wall, the bold conventional pattern or diaper used around the arches of the windows; another pattern appears above the southern arch which opens from this transept into the nave. At the side of the same window in the east wall the paintings are still visible, but very dim. The martyrdom of St. Edmund the King seems to be the subject represented.

The north transept, now converted into a vestry, was until recently fitted up with a "bench," and used for the Rector's Court, for, as has been already mentioned, the jurisdiction was in the Rector, who was *ex officio* Commissary of the Bishop of Rochester, and exempt from all ecclesiastical authority except personal visitation by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The piscina for the altar remains, and also the upper angle of the right hand side of the reredos of the altar, which serves to

* There has been at least one altar in this transept, and a piscina still remains,



— = 1 inch



— = 1 inch

F. C. J. Spurrell del.

GLASS IN WINDOWS OF THE NORTH AISLE OF CLIFFE CHURCH, HOO.

The^{rs} Kell, Lithographer,
40, King St^o Covent Garden

mark a mis-restoration of the sill of the window adjoining it, which, as it is now, would descend into the middle of the old reredos. The piece of furniture in the middle, dividing the clergy vestry from the choir vestry, is made out of the old pews, and opens on both sides, being used to keep the surplices, etc., belonging to the clergy and choir. Two curious hollowed stones, one perfect, and the other much broken, are here preserved. They are supposed to have been holy water stoups. This north chapel is separated from the rest of the Church by an oaken screen of late Decorated or early Perpendicular character.

The pulpit, which was placed on its stone base two years ago, seems to bear its date upon the bracket of the hour glass, 1636. The ancient roof of the nave was destroyed in 1730. There are left in the windows of the north aisle some small fragments of the ancient stained glass, the Blessed Virgin with our Lord as a child in her arms, and a ship,* besides which all else has perished, "which thing is an allegory."

"NITERIS INCASSUM CHRISTI SUBMERGERE NAVEM

"FLUCTUAT, AT NUNQUAM MERGITUR ILLA RATIS."

In the east end of the south aisle is a piscina made of pieces of window tracery, probably inserted in a hasty way during the short return to the old services in the reign of Queen Mary. This piscina was discovered when the old pews were removed. The altar to which it belonged probably stood against a low wall, such as still remains at the east end of the north aisle. In both aisles the ancient string-course may be traced, beneath the windows, and around the doorways; in the south aisle, the old seats of masonry remain around the walls of its west end.

The chancel, at the entrance of which there is no arch as is generally the case, has six ancient windows, arranged in pairs, four of Flamboyant, and two (the easternmost) of Kentish tracery. The east window, together with the old roof, was removed in 1732. Rector Green has left a record of their

* In the "water" in which the "ship" floats are some curious representations of fishes, and in one of the windows of the south aisle the figure of a ram's head is still to be seen.

removal in one of the Register books belonging to the Church.* The steps of the chancel were destroyed, and some parcloes removed, about 1640, when Dr. Annesley (an ancestor, by the way, of John and Charles Wesley) was intruded into the Rectory, from which Dr. Griffin Higgs† had been ejected. Since the present Rector came into residence in 1869, the chancel steps have been replaced, the floor repaved with tiles of good design; the missing portions of the sedilia, which are of very elaborate late "Decorated" workmanship, restored; the oak reredos of 1732 removed; and the choir-seats rearranged and added to. Only six of the stalls are ancient. There used to be six more, which with other "carved work" are said to have been burnt as fire-wood many years ago by an Anabaptist churchwarden; when probably the ancient organ case, mentioned by Hasted, likewise perished. An Archbishop's head has been inserted at the end of the string-course on the north side of the interior of the chancel, in the place of an exceedingly modern "devil," which till recently confronted the battered physiognomy of a monk, which for ages, through good report and through evil report alike, has preserved a mingled aspect of benevolence and self-satisfaction. By these two heads the condition of the ancient customs of Cliffe are kept alive—the principal manor here, or rather a moiety of it, having till the Dissolution belonged to the Monastery of Christ Church at Canterbury, and the other

* "Mem^{dum}. The roof of the church was taken down, new laid, and the Lead new cast anno 1730. And the Roof of the chancel anno 1732, at which time the east window was pulled down and rebuilt, and both Church and Chancel ceiled.

"M^r THOMAS PEMBLE } Churchwardens. (Signed) G. GREEN, B.D.,
"M^r DAVID BROWN } Rector."

† This Griffin Higgs was a man of some mark; for Anthony & Wood in the *Athenæ Oxonienses* devotes upwards of a column to his life and doings. Son of Griffith and Sarah Higgs, he was baptized at South Stoke, Oxon, 28th Oct., 1589. His grandparents were Nicholas and Maria Higgs who lived in Gloucestershire. He was B.D. of St. John's College, Oxford, and D.D. of the University of Leyden, having been resident chaplain to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, from 1627 to about 1638. Besides being Rector of Cliffe, he was Chaunter, i.e. Head of the Chapter, of St. David's—a dignity now merged in the Deanery established in that Church by the Welsh Cathedrals Act. He was a protégé of Archbishop Laud, and by him collated to the Rectory of Cliffe, and presented to the Chauntership of St. David's, which was Archbishop Laud's option in that See. King Charles I. in 1638 made Dr. Higgs Dean of Lichfield, but from all three preferments he was ejected; and he died at the place where he was born, Stoke Abbot, otherwise South Stoke, December 16, 1659, and was buried in the chancel of the Church there.

moiety with the advowson of the Rectory having been vested in the Archbishop. Now the advowson is all that the Archbishop holds at Cliffe. The sedilia canopies are groined, and the cusps of their arches bear grotesque carvings. Just west of them is a small priest's door. Opposite to the sedilia there is an Easter sepulchre—a tomb-like erection under a handsome five-foiled arch, each foil of which is trebly cusped. Here, in pre-Reformation days, the Crucifix was laid on Good Friday, and replaced on the altar on Easter morning, both actions being accompanied by certain solemnities. Immediately west of this Easter sepulchre, is a blocked ancient doorway, which probably led into the vestry. The stained glass in the upper part of the windows of the south side of the chancel was discovered, carefully laid by in a box, in that disgraceful place at the west end of the north aisle called the bone-hole, which, it is hoped, will soon be abolished, and a proper shed erected elsewhere for the sexton's tools. This glass was found to fit exactly the place it now occupies, except the easternmost window, which is composed of fragments—a portion of which represents a castellated building, not unlike Cooling Castle, as to the meaning of which, however, tradition is silent. This ancient glass was reset by Messrs. Powell and Sons of White Friars, London, who also replaced the former miserable common quarrels with the present glass. The stairs leading to the ancient rood-loft still remain, and we can see the loft doorway, high up in the west end of the north wall of the chancel, but the doorway leading to the loft-stairs, from the north transept, has been destroyed and walled up. The remains of the ancient rood-screen have been preserved as well as they could be, and only stay where they are until they can be replaced by a new screen, which could be done for about £80, sufficient of the original being left to serve as a guide for reconstruction.

The east wall of the chancel on examination last year disclosed distinct traces of the reredos of the ancient altar. It was five feet high, by seven feet six inches wide, and it had a low pediment; but the whole of the lower part of the east wall was in too ruinous a condition to be treated, except at very great cost, otherwise than it has been, viz., the defects made good with stones and cement, and the wall plastered to match

the side walls. At the same time the ancient jambs of the east window were found *in situ*, built of Reigate stone much ex-foliated. They were fifteen feet apart, and the sill of the window is seven feet above the level of the highest part of the chancel floor. The spaces between the ancient jambs, and the sides of the present miserable aperture, were found to be filled in with broken fragments of the beautiful "Decorated" window, which must have been something like the pattern, cut, with that intention, in the panel of the new Litany desk. This was copied from the beautiful "nameless window" mentioned by Rickman and Sharpe, and, as it is thoroughly congruent with the side windows, the "nameless window" may by a happy accident be the lost east window of Cliffe Church. The chancel was doubtless embattled like the rest of the church, until Rector Green perpetrated his Vandalism, leaving the upper courses of masonry all disordered, and so differing from the alternate courses of flint and rag in the lower part of the walls. The "rusticated" brick work on each side of the east window outside marks the width of the ancient window, the top of which would be considerably above the present roof.

The built-up doorway in the north side of the "sanctuary," opened into a vestry, similar to that at Stone, near Dartford. From the churchyard we see the corbels of its very low roof, as well as a piscina and an aumbrie, still remaining in the exterior of the chancel wall. The foundations of this building lie immediately below the turf and could readily be traced.

The Communion plate belonging to the Church is (with the exception of the paten) of no great interest. It is of massive silver, and comprises—flagon, chalice, and two salvers, and was presented to the Church by Rector Green. The paten, of pre-Reformation date, is of silver gilt and is enamelled. There is represented upon it the Father as "the Ancient of Days" enthroned, and supporting the Son hanging on the Cross, above the head of which is the Holy Dove, and round the rim is this inscription:—

"BENEDICAMUS PATREM ET FILIUM CUM SPIRITU SANCTO."

It has been engraved for the *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica* of the Camden Society.

The Registers date from the year 1558, and the more ancient ones have been newly bound at the cost of the present Rector.

The churchyard is very large, being about two acres in extent, and has in it some wrecks of ancient elm trees; but it contains, so far as is known, no memorials of any historic interest. At its east end there are some ancient timber houses, formerly occupied by the priests of the chantries within the Church. They passed into lay hands at the Reformation, and having been long used as "Poor Houses," have been again sold. There is an interesting window belonging to one of them visible from the street.* Of monuments in the Church, there is in the nave a stone, probably a coffin lid, bearing this inscription:—

"IONE LA FEMME JOHAN RAM GYST

"ICI, DEU DE SA ALME EIT MERCI."

There is also a beautiful slab with a floriated cross, and another of a more simple design, both without any legend, also a very large wedge-shaped stone without inscription. In the north aisle there is a large slab of Reigate stone inscribed—

"ELIENORE DE OLIVE GIST ICI. DEU DE

"SA ALME EIT MERCI. AMEN PAR CHARITE."

With a half-length figure of Elienore. This is figured in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1794, plate iii., page 809. This monument is now unavoidably concealed by the new seats. There are also some seventeenth century brasses for the family of Faunce;† one of the series is missing. In the south

* The village green adjoining the churchyard on the south goes by the name of the Butt-way, and is probably an unenclosed portion of the area upon which the parish butts were set up in the days when the use of the long-bow was obligatory upon every able-bodied free-man below the rank of Knight or Esquire. The archery practice generally took place on Sundays and Holy Days after Divine Service.

† Here lyeth the body of Thomas Faunce yeoman, who had two wives Alyce & Elizabeth & had issue by Alyce 2 sones and one daughter & by Elizabeth one sonne and 2 Daughters. The sayd Thomas Deceased y^e first day of July 1609 beinge of y^e age of LXXXIII yeres: and Alyce dyed y^e first daye of Marche 1592 being aged LXIII yeres: Thomas His eldest son'e by Alyce being Mayor of y^e cittie of Rochester at his Fathers decease.

Here under lyeth interred the body of Bonham Faunce late of this parish Gent: aged 55: Hee had issue by his two wives Elizabeth and Mary eich of them one childe; Hee dyed the 15 day of February 1652.

aisle there is a very late brass for Elizabeth Gissome,* also a stone for the Baynards† of this parish; and on either side of the east end of the nave there are modern tablets erected by the parishioners in memory of Rectors Simpkinson and Burney. There is also on the eastern respond of the south arcade a brass plate which records the gift by John Brown of certain lands to the school in the year 1699.

In the chancel are two large stones with the matrices of their brasses, evidently in memory of ecclesiastics—probably Rectors of the parish, but who they were it is impossible to say. In one of the Register books the burial of Mrs. Annesley, the wife of the intruded Rector, in the time of the great Rebellion, is recorded as having been effected to the east of the largest of these two stones. Just east of the organ is a slab of Bethersden marble, much defaced by time, and with no legend; also there is another with the matrix of a small half length brass of an ecclesiastic, under the tiles in the middle of the chancel between the choir-seats. It was so shattered that it was left as it was, and the levelling for the tiles just allowed them to cover it and the stone above mentioned. There are also to be seen outside the Church under the foundation of the west wall of the south aisle some pieces of ancient gravestones, which have evidently been improperly diverted from their original purpose into foundation stones.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that many years will not elapse before Cliffe Church, one of the largest and most interesting in West Kent, shall have undergone a thorough restoration; which, however, must be a work of very considerable cost, it being roughly estimated that it would take from £1500 to £2000 to complete the satisfactory restoration of the chancel; and at the very least from £3000 to £4000 that of

* Here lyeth the body of Elizabeth Gissome late wife of James Gissome of this parrish who departed this life the 14 day of November 1668 being aged 19 yeares & 10 moneths Vivit post funere virtus.

† Here lyeth the body of Richard Baynard who departed this life May day 1672 aged 46 years.

Here lyeth the body of Dorryti Baynard late wife of John Baynard of this parish who departed this life y^e 21 day of September 1667.

Also here lyeth the body of Richard Baynard sone of John and Dorryti Baynard who departed this life March 17th 1671 aged 8 years.

Here lyeth the body of John Baynard Husband to Dorryti Baynard and father to Richard Baynard who departed this life May 7th 1676 aged 56 yeares.

the nave and aisles. And as Cliffe is now, owing to the establishment of Cement Works, recovering rapidly from the decay which overtook it after the fire, by which the greater part of the town, as it then was, was destroyed some three hundred years ago, there seems every prospect that its noble Church may again become as highly appreciated by a large and devout congregation (illuminated, however, by a purer and more primitive Faith), as it ever was in its earliest and best days of construction and enlargement.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CLIFFE PAROCHIAL REGISTERS,

Which commence with the 2nd of December, 1558.

Margery Goodale and Margarate filpot were married the ix Junii 1561.

*[Subsequent entries shew that the bridegroom's name was
Walter Goodale.—W. A. S. R.]*

Maye 1562. The xxvth of Maye was baptised Phillip Coke the daughter of John Coke and she was buried the xi of October A^o Dⁿⁱ 1582 being a mayde welbeloved of all her neighbours.

February 1562 [1563]. Olde Clement Sapience was buried the xxth Februarii.

December 1564. Margaret Smyth the daughter of John Smyth of the Place was baptised the xxiiij Decemb'.

28 Jan. 1564 [1565] was buried Mother Iuolde the clark's mother.

June 1565 was buried Mother Bucking widowe.

1565. Goodwife Dullie was buried the xxvth September.

1571 April. Abel's wife, Alice is her name, was buried the xxiiij Aprilis.

December 1573. Greate Henry Somner was buried the iijth Decemb'.

Januarie 1573 [1574]. Henry Somner at the Crosse was buried the xiiijth Januarii.

Julie 1574. Sir Richard Tuttye vicar of Grayne was married unto Mary Somner widowe the first day of Julie.

November 1574. Lettes Braune of Westly Courte was buried the xxth November.

September 1575. William Wilson the sonne of Robert Wilson was baptised the iijth September thes be godfathers and godmothers William Thorne one William Punchion and Elizabeth Williams.

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John Younge the sonne of John Younge was baptised the xviii September the goodfathers John Swenam and George Browne the godmother Phillip Cocke.

[*N.B. Three other similar entries occur in the following January.—W. A. S. R.*]

Marche 1577 [1578]. Margaret Mudge the daughter of Thomas Mudge was borne the xith Marcii. Witnesses Jo. Parker. Agnis Burr. Margarat Bennet &c.

June 1577. Thomas Rise servaunt to John Williams of Bery Courte was killed with his master's dounge courte the first of this moneth he was seene by the coroner and buried the ijth of June.

William Baker servaunt to John Davis was killed in a sande pitt as he was digging sande the xvth of the moneth the coroner's quest vewed him and he was buried the day followinge.

Julie 1577. Martha Smyth the daughter of Mathewe Smyth was baptised the vijth Julii witnesses Jacob his wife Martha and Katherin the children of Thomas Randall.

[*A similar entry appears in the following month, August.—W. A. S. R.*]

1577. Edward Snowe base borne was baptised the xvth Julii his mother's name is France Wapull for suertie that the parish of Cliff shall not be charged with the bringing up of the same childe bands are taken of Thomas Pigion nowe Churchwarden at Cliffe and of one Edwarde Cuttler Cytizen and haburdasher of London in the some of x^{li} and the saide France *did her penauunce* here the xvijth of August following.

May 1578. Edward Snowe a child base borne (his mother's name being Frances Wapull) was burrid the vth Maii.

December 1578. Sir Thomas Uppington minister was buried the vith December.

August 1581. Margaret the daughter of Thomas Lymsford a straunger whose wife went of begging or as some terme yt of goodding.

[*Query, is this term "goodding" the origin of the modern expression "gadding about?"—W. A. S. R.*]

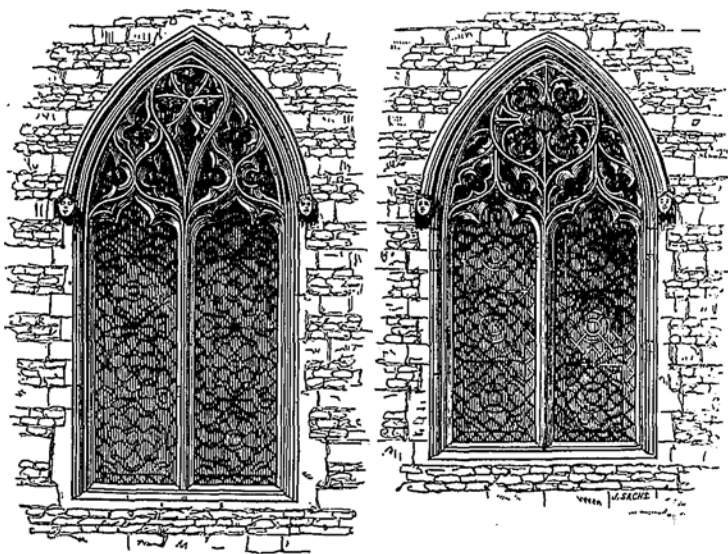
June 1582. Rabbidge Germon widowe was buried the xxvth Junii.

January 1582 [1583]. Henry Anderson a poore man which came by chaunce to Westlie Courte and dyed being diseased with the mold fall and was buried the xith Januarii.

April 1583. A Crisom of William Parkers was buried the ij Aprilis unbaptised.

- Julie 1583. Alice Corte an old mayde was buried the 7th Julii.
- September 1583. William Gell minister and curat of this parish was married unto Marie Hornbie the daughter of John Hornbie vicar of the Parish of Frindsburie the ixth September.
- Cawlip Swetnam son of Swetnam was baptised xvth September.
- December 1583. Leonell Pigion the sonne of Pigion was buried the xvth December before buried in the Parish of Haulstoe.
- Julie 1588. The 25th of this month The Camp begane at Tilbury in Essex. { John Smyth and Elizabeth Cobham were ioyned together in matrimony the xxijth Julii.
- August 1589. Friswity Vale the daughter of Robert Vale was baptised the xxiiith Augusti.
- August 1591. Phillip Roote fruterer fell down from the topp of a ladder in George Boydens orchard dyed was viewed by the Coronors quest and buried the xxijth Augusti.
- December 1592. Anne Cobham the wife of Thomas Cobham gent. was buried the xxvith December.
- December 1595. Katherin Duggen the daughter of John Duggen of the parish of S^t Toolis in Southwarke was buried the xixth December.

[*N.B. S^t Toolis was the vulgar name of S^t Olave's Southwark; hence the street in which that church stands is called Tooley Street.—W. A. S. R.*]



WINDOWS IN THE SOUTH WALL OF THE CHANCEL.