



Claverley Church and its Wall-Paintings

Philip Mainwaring Johnston

To cite this article: Philip Mainwaring Johnston (1903) Claverley Church and its Wall-Paintings, Archaeological Journal, 60:1, 51-71, DOI: [10.1080/00665983.1903.10852937](https://doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1903.10852937)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1903.10852937>



Published online: 16 Jul 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2

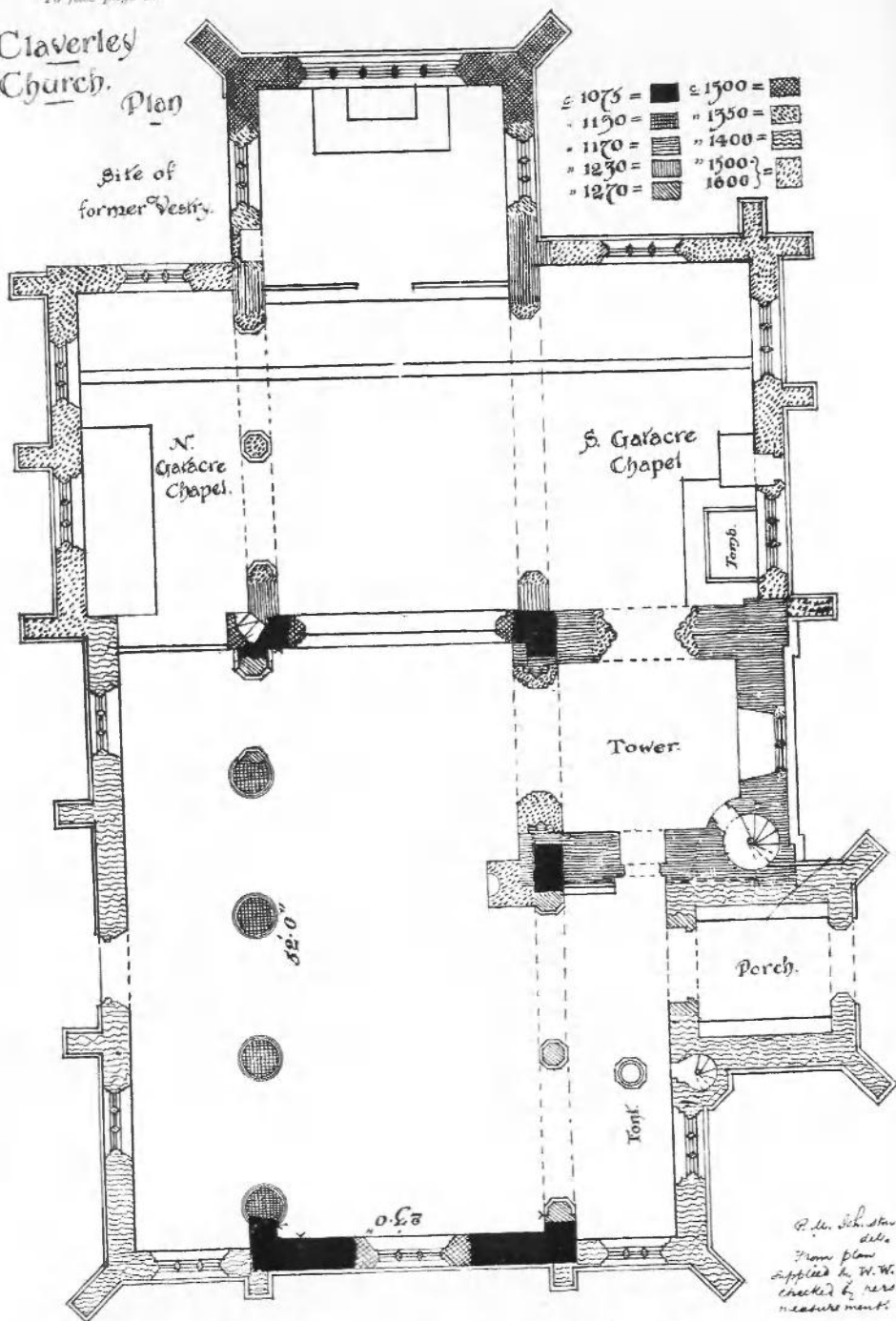


View related articles [↗](#)

Claverley Church. Plan

Site of
former Vestry.

£ 1078 =	£ 1300 =
" 1130 =	" 1350 =
" 1170 =	" 1400 =
" 1230 =	" 1500 =
" 1270 =	1600 }



W. H. St. John
del.
From plan
supplied by W. W. Bell,
checked by personal
measurements.

FIG. 1.

CLAVERLEY CHURCH AND ITS WALL-PAINTINGS.

By PHILIP MAINWARING JOHNSTON.

The Church of All Saints, Claverley, somewhat remotely situated, about seven miles eastward of the town of Bridgnorth, Shropshire, is a very interesting building with many noteworthy features. Its claim to the attention of antiquaries has been greatly increased during the last year by the many discoveries made in the course of a restoration conducted on archaeological lines—not least of these the very curious early wall-paintings with which this paper is principally concerned. For the excellent results of this conservative restoration the Building Committee and their architect, Mr. W. Wood Bethell, deserve every praise.

The early history of the church is closely connected with some of these remarkable discoveries. That there was a pre-Conquest church on the present site admits of little doubt; but no structural remains of it can be pointed to with any certainty in the existing building; the foundations of older walls and remains of floor-levels that have been brought to light may be assigned with greater probability to the first Norman church, than to one of earlier date. There is, however, a very singular feature in the nave which may belong to an older building, viz., a platform of rough stones, about 3 feet in thickness. It is the opinion of Mr. Bethell, that this marks the area occupied by the pre-Conquest church.¹ Also a very curious rough-hewn font, discovered in a neighbouring garden, may equally have belonged to that building or to the Early Norman one. The font now in the church is a particularly fine example of the middle Norman period, c. 1130.

¹ But why 3 feet in thickness? The church is elevated on a mound and any such platform seems superfluous. I would suggest that this thick floor represents the *debris* of the Saxon

church, thrown down and roughly levelled. Stone is plentiful locally and so this waste of material would not signify.

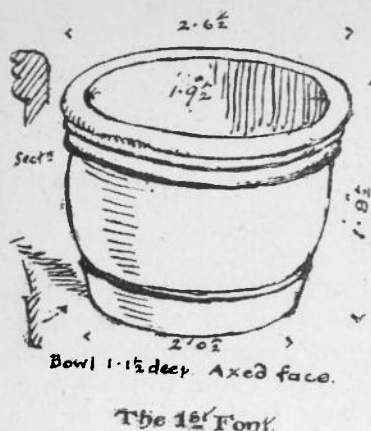


FIG. 2.

We first reach solid ground in the history of the church with the period marked by that *annus mirabilis* 1066. Soon after the Conquest, Earl Roger de Montgomery,¹ one of William's most powerful lieutenants, received as part of his share of the spoils large estates in Shropshire, including Claverley and the immediate neighbourhood, and one of his first acts here, as in his Sussex manors, seems to

have been to build churches and endow religious foundations. In particular, we have the record of the creation and endowment of a college of secular canons, the Dean of the college being the Vicar of Claverley.

"FOUNDATION CHARTER OF QUATFORD.

"July 22 1086.

"In the time of King William, Roger the Earl and Adelaysa the Countess built a church in Quatford in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Mary Magdalen and all the Saints of GOD. They gave Ardintone, except the land of Walter the smith, and that land which lies between the water and the Mount. . . . Be it known to all that Roger the Earl gave Milinchope in exchange to St. Milberg for the claim which she had in Ardintone. And further, they gave the Church of Claverley and the land which pertains to it, with all the tithes, and the Church of Alveley, and Bobington, and Laixtonia, and Morville and others, and to serve the Church they established there six Canons. And all these things did the Earl by concession of his sons, who were there present, and on that day did give Burecot as a foundation gift.

Witnesses.

Wolfstan, Bishop of Worcester.

Robert Lesing, Bishop of Hereford.

Robert Lindsey, Bishop of Chester.

"Archdeacons of Hereford, Salop, Stafford, Worcester, 1 Priest, 3 Barons, 3 Monks, Sheriff."²

¹ Domesday says: "Earl Roger holds *Claverlege*." There was a considerable population, and a mill, but no church is mentioned. Claverley was then in Staffordshire.

² Eyton's *Shropshire*. All these place-names can be identified, with the exception, perhaps, of "Laixtonia." I would venture the suggestion that it is monkish Latin for Great and Little



FIG. 3.—THE FONT, CLAVERLEY.

There were thus six churches in the chapter, served by six canons, and as we find that the Vicar of Claverley was the Dean, that church, if not the most important, was probably the first to be built, or rebuilt, by Earl Roger. In all likelihood the Norman church was in existence in 1075, or a little earlier.

The following is a skeleton architectural history of Roger's church. To-day it consists of nave, north and south aisles, southern tower and porch, chancel, and north and south chapels. The building is almost entirely constructed of a purplish-red sandstone, very hard and durable, quarried locally.

- c. 1075. The first Norman church built on the site of the primitive pre-Conquest building. Of this church, which consisted of a nave, 52 feet \times 23 feet (occupying the same area as the present), small apsidal chancel, and shallow north and south porches, portions of the walls remain, together with a few lengths of string course of a common Norman section. This string seems to have been used outside as well as inside the walls, probably serving as a sill to the windows and abacus to the chancel arch. The latter, from traces discovered at the restoration, was about 6 feet wide. These early walls, though of considerable height, were only 2 feet 6 inches thick.
- c. 1130. The north wall of the nave was pulled down, excepting a pier at the western end to serve as an abutment and about 10 feet of the eastern end (perhaps retained to shut in a nave altar); and an arcade of three semi-circular arches on lofty cylindrical columns was set up on its foundations. The arches are of two square-edged orders, quite plain, and the capitals and bases of the columns are circular. Their mouldings also are of a comparatively late type, and though the general effect of the work is early, because of its boldness

Leysters—villages in N. Herefordshire, some twenty-five miles south-west of Claverley. The other villages are much nearer, in the counties of Shropshire

and Staffordshire. "St. Milberg" means Much Wenlock Abbey, founded by Earl Roger.

and plain character, there is no doubt that the arcade belongs to the later Norman period. The

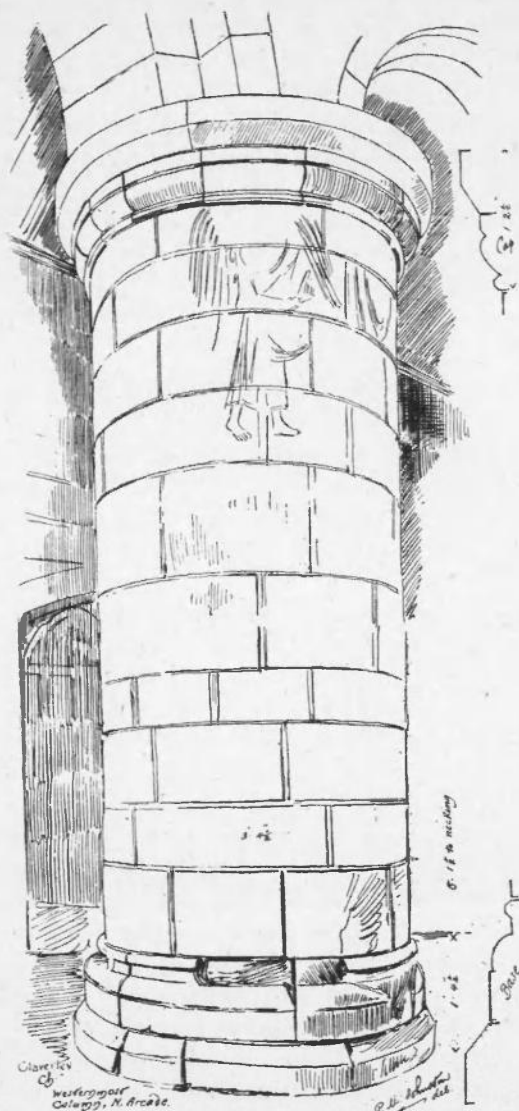


FIG. 4.

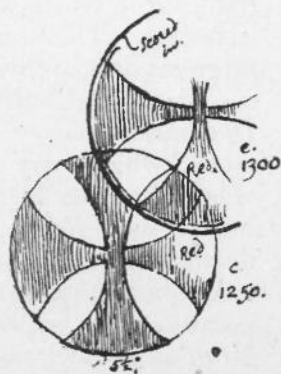
general effect of the lofty cylindrical columns and low arches is singularly reminiscent of the

Norman arcades of Gloucester and Tewkesbury. The Grecian ovolo moulding of the capitals is noteworthy. These arches opened into a narrow aisle, but the outer wall of this was pulled down and rebuilt further northward at a later period. One of the window-heads of this Norman aisle (or perhaps one of those lighting Roger's nave) was discovered in the aisle wall. It is a plain circular opening in a square stone, and shows that glazing or shutters were dispensed with, the splay running out to the face, except for a small chamfer.

- c. 1170. A massive tower of two stages about 16 feet \times 15 feet (walls 4 feet 6 inches thick) was erected on the south side of Roger's nave, at its eastern extremity, utilizing a length of the older wall on its northern side, thickened towards the nave for this purpose. A lofty arch, acutely pointed, was pierced in this wall to throw the ground story of the tower into the nave, and there is plain evidence that this extra floor space was used as a chapel. Probably there was a small apse, or more likely a buttress-recess, on the eastern side, to contain the altar. A newel stair was formed in the south-west angle, and a doorway, originally external, in the western wall of this tower. This door has a pointed arch on the inner, and a round one on the outer face. The bold plinth moulding flanking it on its western side was, of course, also external. This tower-chapel was lighted by a large window in the south wall, the outlines of which can be traced, although it has been filled with Decorated tracery at a later period. The upper story, which may also have contained an altar, was lighted by large windows with pointed heads, boldly moulded. These were blocked up in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.
- c. 1270. At about this date the somewhat clumsy narrow pointed arch between the chancel arch and the Norman arcade was pierced; also the short aisle of two bays was added on the south side of the nave, Roger's wall being demolished for the purpose. Part of the west face of the tower thus become

internal. The capitals of this arcade are curiously carved with dragons, or basilisks, gnawing human faces. Possibly, as this aisle was the Baptistry, these have reference to the contending forces of good and evil. The centre pillar and responds, which are of octagonal section, show in their mouldings the transition from Early English to Decorated. The south door within the porch may be of this period, but the windows of the aisle, as of the church generally, are later insertions. Indeed, the walls of this aisle may have been rebuilt, as were those of the north aisle, in the fifteenth century.

- c. 1300. There probably was a chancel of intermediate date between the Early Norman apse and the present spacious and dignified chancel.¹ The date of this latter is clearly marked by the noble geometrical east window and the chancel arch. The tracery of this window is very beautiful. A huge quatrefoil with pointed lobes fills the upper part of the arch, and below are five lights, the centre depressed by the quatrefoil and the others acutely pointed, all cusped; the spandril pieces are also cusped. The tracery bars are very slender and simply chamfered. The gable-coping, buttresses and weatherings are of the same date. The west window of the nave, of non-descript character, may belong to this period. It has plain intersecting tracery of poor design.



Consecration
Crosses in Chancel.

FIG. 4A.

¹ Parts of the walls of this earlier thirteenth century chancel remain in all probability. Two consecration crosses, one partly obliterating the other, remain on the north and south walls of the Sacrarium, showing that the chancel was re-consecrated after extension (see Fig. 4A). Four more consecration crosses remain on the west wall of the nave—twelfth or thirteenth, and fifteenth century in date.

- c. 1350. The side windows of the chancel have very curious tracery of Transitional-Decorated character. They recall those in Bishop Edington's work at Edington Church, Wilts, dated 1352. The sedilia and piscina below that on the south side are plain examples of the same period. The chancel probably contained two other windows on either side to the westward, of the same date and character as the foregoing; remains of their heads are still to be seen in the walls, over the later arches. There was also a vestry of low pitch against the north wall, the door to which is blocked up at present.
- c. 1400 to c. 1600. Later alterations can best be grouped together. They include:—1. The addition of an extra story to the tower, with the massive buttress projecting into the nave. This buttress has in its northern face a curious niche with a cill near the floor, which has all the appearance of a stone seat.¹ 2. The rebuilding of the outer walls of the aisles; the erection of the porch, the heightening of the nave walls by the addition of a clerestory with square-headed windows in pairs, and a flat, heavily moulded and panelled roof with richly carved bosses. Similar roofs were put over the aisles, and the walls of the nave and aisles crowned with battlementing. 3. Late in the fifteenth century the Gatacre chapel on the north side of the chancel was built, and early in the sixteenth century that on the south side—also appropriated to the Gatacre family—was thrown out. These contain an interesting series of sixteenth century monuments belonging to that family, and an elaborate tomb, dated 1558, with effigies, to Sir Robert Broke, Common Serjeant and Recorder of London, and Speaker of the House of Commons, with his two wives, one of them a Gatacre—and seventeen children. This tomb is Renaissance in character and displays very curious details. When the south Gatacre chapel was built an arch was pierced in the east wall of the

¹ ? For use by the priest in hearing confessions.

tower to communicate with it, and the twelfth century arch on the north was partly built up and a smaller one of debased character formed within it. 4. Finally, in 1601, as appears by a date on one of the brackets, a fine high pitched roof, of Gothic form but with Renaissance details, was erected over the chancel. There was much woodwork of this period (including a fine pulpit) at one time in the church,¹ as well as earlier screens—some of which has been rescued from later pewing and is being carefully preserved in the restored church. A quantity of fine encaustic



FIG. 5.



FIG. 6.

tiles, found when the older floor levels were reached, have been collected and laid down. One of these bears an extremely spirited design of a griffin, probably the cognizance of a family connected with the church; another, the eucharistic chalice; and a third a curious arrangement of letters, the precise meaning of which has not been satisfactorily elucidated. Probably it is what is known as an "Alphabet" tile. The first and last which are here illustrated (Figs. 5 and 6) are of late thirteenth or early fourteenth century

¹ Also a good deal of early eighteenth century carving, quite Gothic in spirit, all of which has been carefully preserved. The north aisle roof was extensively repaired at this time, and

several dates are on the brackets of the principal timbers, together with the usual initials of vicar and churchwardens.

date; the other is probably fifteenth century. The platform and base of the high altar were also discovered below the pavement.

The foregoing outline may serve to show "the times that passed over" this ancient church, and its growth from the austere plain building, simple in plan, to the diversified and complex structure of to-day. Let us now return to its history.

Earl Roger seems to have been a man of comparatively humane instincts for those wild and stormy times, and Adeliza, his Countess and second wife, was, according to Ordericus Vitalis, "remarkable for her good sense and piety, and frequently used her influence with her husband to befriend the monks and protect the poor." Roger's eldest son Robert de Belesme, on the other hand, was an infamous monster, remarkable even in those days for his cruelty and lawlessness. We are told that he "slew the Welsh like sheep, conquered them, enslaved them, and flayed them with nails of iron." Ordericus Vitalis calls him "more cruel than Nero, Decius, or Diocletian." He it was who abandoned the castle which his father had built at Quatford and built another of great strength, at Bridgnorth, of which he was made Constable.¹ He moved the Collegiate church also from Quatford to Bridgnorth in the year 1102. Soon afterwards he was banished by Henry I. for his share in the conspiracy of Robert, Duke of Normandy. He had replaced the canons in Quatford by monks from La Sauve Majeure.² Although Claverley is not mentioned in the deeds of La Sauve Majeure, gifts to "Catford" (Quatford) are recorded. When Robert de Belesme thus forfeited his estates Claverley came into the King's hands, and was retained as a royal manor. The *Testa de Nevill* says,—"The church of Claverley is in the King's gift; Peter

¹ "Robert de Belesme built a very strong castle at Bridgnorth on the river Severn, transferring the town and people of Quatford to the new fortress." *Ordericus Vitalis*, Vol. III, p. 220 (Bk. 10, chap. 7). There had been an early Saxon castle, but it is said to have been outside the town, on a hill

now called "Pam Pudding Hill," near a village with the significant name of "Oldbury." Earl Roger's castle at Quatford was built in 1085. It is called in Domesday "the New Berg."

² See Mr. Round's *Calendar of Documents preserved in France* (Record Office).

de Orivall holds it; it is worth forty marcs.”¹ Quatford is described in 1255 as “a member of the Church of Claverley,” and in 1412 as “annexed to the Deanery.” These quotations serve to show that the relative importance of the two places had changed.

In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII. (1534-5) Claverley Rectory is appropriated to the Dean of Bridgnorth College, to which place the Quatford foundation, as we have seen, had been removed. It would seem, therefore, that after remaining in the hands of the Crown for a greater or less time the church was restored to Earl Roger’s reconstituted foundation.

Let us now return to the fabric of the church and consider the remarkable early paintings which are the main object of this paper. I have noticed above the painted consecration crosses, of dates from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, found in the chancel and nave. Besides these, paintings of two dates were discovered on either side of the chancel arch. That on the northern side displayed a sort of trellis or “field” of white quatrefoils on a black ground, and slight remains of a figure. This was evidently of a date coeval with the arch (c. 1300). On the other side was found a nude kneeling figure and remains of one or two others, clothed, with text-scrolls and other objects, too fragmentary and indistinct to make out. The latter were probably from their coarse style of execution quite as late as 1400, and appeared to belong to the same date and scheme as a rudely executed series of figures and stencilling around and below the clerestory windows of the nave. These were all done in the poorest manner both technically and artistically.

Far different in merit and archaeological interest was the long strip of painting discovered below these fifteenth century “daubs.”

¹ My friend, Mr. L. F. Salzmann, to whom I owe some of the above quotations from deeds in the Record Office, quotes in connection with this entry the following from the Plea Rolls for 25th Henry III.: “Master P. de Radenor, official of the Bp. of Coventry and Lichfield, & Robt., Chaplain of Patiham” (the modern Pattingham, Staffs., near Claverley) “were sum-

moned to show wherefore, against the King’s prohibition, they suspended the Church of Claverley, which is the King’s free chapel, and sequestered the goods of the same church, and caused the corn of Peter de Rivall, rector of the same church, to be thrashed, to make a contribution to the Pope, to the prejudice of the Crown,” &c.

The great columns of the Norman north arcade showed plain traces of having been decorated, after a fashion, at or soon after the actual date of their erection in *circa* 1130. They had been lime-whited over the dark purplish-red stone, and sham masonry joints in a purer white had been drawn with a wide brush across them at regular intervals. In addition rude figures of angels, very imperfect, in faint red outline with a little yellow tinting,

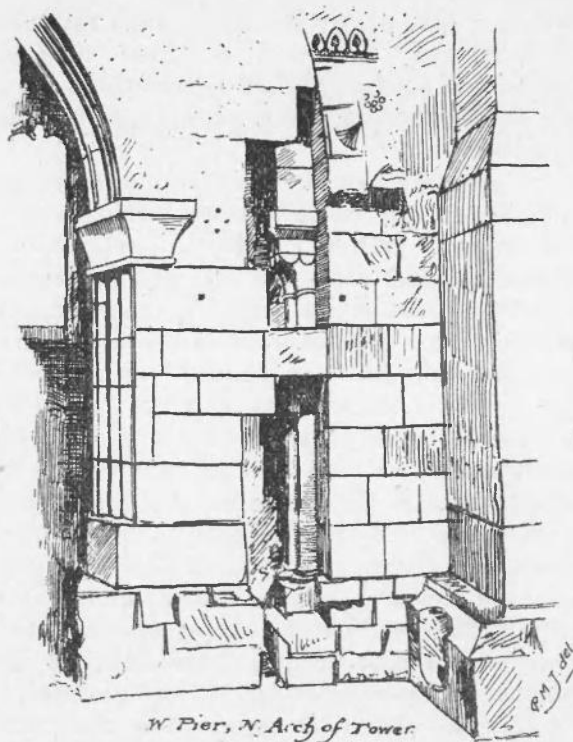


FIG. 7.

are to be seen on the west respond and on the first column from the west (Fig. 4). These also were probably executed soon after the columns were built.

In about 1170 the massive tower-chapel was added to the south side of the nave. The Transitional date of the work is plainly visible from the acutely pointed arch, and also from the elegant clustered shafts with concave

scalloped capitals which have been brought to light in the restoration.¹ Upon and around this arch were found remains of colour decoration, evidently of the same date as the arch itself, including a conventional tree and figures of angels. Also, within the tower-chapel other figures of angels and six-winged seraphim together with scroll-work, "stoning" and general ornamentation were found—all of the same character and date. The colouring was chiefly in dark red, pink and yellow ochre upon a coat of lime-white. All these fragments have been carefully preserved.² I mention these comparatively unimportant remains first, because they lead up to, and help to fix the date of, the very remarkable paintings now to be described.

There is a long strip of blank wall between the fifteenth century clerestory and the crowns of the Norman arches in the north arcade. When the thick coatings of colour-wash had been scaled off in parts it was evident that at least two series of mediaeval paintings lay beneath. The uppermost was very inferior work of the fifteenth century (and wherever this did not conflict with more ancient decoration it has been preserved); but under this the wall was found to be covered with a very elaborate scheme, painted on a thin coat of whitewash upon the rubble stonework of the walls, without any plastering properly so called. Fortunately the actual uncovering was undertaken almost at the outset by a gentleman skilled in such delicate work—Mr. Griffin of Tettenhall, aided by the Misses Wilson, nieces of the Vicar—and every care was taken to bring to light all that remained of the more ancient painting. Subsequently I was requested by the Committee to complete the uncovering, and to apply a preservative treatment, and for this purpose a scaffold was erected, with the aid of which I was enabled to take tracings of nearly the whole of the long strip above the arches and of the paintings on the spandrels between the arches. These tracings were

¹ These shafts and the inner, square-edged order of the arch were quite invisible till recently. Sufficient of the blocking of the sixteenth or seventeenth century arch that was inserted to

strengthen the tower was removed to show them.

² Upon the apex of the inner arch of the Trans-Norman window in the upper stage of the tower (E. wall) angels and scroll work have also been found.

coloured in exact imitation of the originals, and from them the accompanying reductions in *fac-simile* have been made.¹

The principal strip extends, for all practical purposes, from end to end of the nave, excluding some 2 or 3 feet at the eastern end; in other words it is almost exactly 50 feet in length, by about 4 feet 8 inches wide, including the top and bottom borders. These borders are painted with running scroll patterns, of the type common in late twelfth and early thirteenth century work, the chief peculiarity being the broad yellow stripes within the red enclosing lines, which give a remarkably rich effect to the design at small cost.² As will be seen at a glance, red and yellow—earth pigments—are the two colours principally employed, but half tones and mixed tints produced from these are also largely used. Below the main strip, and within the spandrels of the arcade, are separate subjects, quite unconnected with that of the strip. They occupy a space almost the same in height. Figures of angels and saints, judges and executioners, seem to have reference to some sacred or legendary subject—probably a martyrology. They are very imperfect.

The subject of the main strip is plainly a battle scene. In the 50 feet of length fourteen horses and their riders are depicted (see the accompanying coloured plates); but of the first five only fragments remain, so that the first of the plates is made to commence with the sixth horse and rider, counting from the west. The first impression made upon the spectator is the extraordinary general resemblance which the painting bears to the Bayeux Tapestry³—an impression that is strengthened by closer observation and comparison, allowing for the difference

¹ A replica of the tracings has been made on thin cartridge paper in a continuous piece and mounted on a stout roller. This has been deposited with the Vicar, and will no doubt be kept in a safe and accessible place for reference. The cost of this, which was not inconsiderable, has been borne by the Building Committee. It is pleasant to draw attention to their public-spirited action.

² Another peculiarity is a 9 shaped ornament in the scroll-work. This has been called the "hook," or

the "comma." It occurs in more than one fragment of twelfth century colouring that has come under my notice, and, perhaps more than anywhere in the paintings of this period, in Norwich Cathedral. I do not think it continued to be used in scroll-work much later than the first decade of the thirteenth century.

³ I use the popular name for the celebrated piece of needlework for convenience, although the term "tapestry" is incorrect as applied to it.


in the date—about one hundred years—between the two. Next, one is struck by the absolutely *secular* character of the strip. No nimbed saint or angel appears in it—in sharp contrast with the spandrils of the arches below, where nearly every figure represents the one or the other. Another noteworthy point is the use of conventional trees, to separate different parts of the subject, or to serve as a background. There are five or six of these in that section of the strip here reproduced, and probably there were four more in the western part of the painting, some being simple scroll work in red and others of a bushy type in red and yellow, strongly recalling the trees found in illuminations of the latter part of the twelfth century. But perhaps in the manner in which these trees divide the subjects, they most strikingly compare with those in the Bayeux Tapestry.¹

The greatest variety possible is obtained with the few colours at the disposal of the artist; thus, the 1st horse has been a yellow one, the 2nd puce or red, 3rd yellow, 4th white, dappled with green spots, 5th puce, 6th dappled, 7th yellow, 8th dappled, 9th puce, 10th yellow, 11th pink, 12th yellow, 13th dappled, 14th puce. Even the outlines are varied, some being pink, others yellow, red, and even white. Nine horses are going westward, five eastwards, the idea of the artist evidently being to represent a confused battle or *mêlée*. The 2nd and 3rd, 4th and 5th, 6th and 7th, 10th and 11th, are *vis-à-vis* in combat. Nos. 1, 5, and 11 of the knights are being unhorsed by their opponents, while No. 8 is shown stretched dead on the ground, his horse's reins being held apparently by a supernatural hand. At the extreme eastern end of the strip are the remains of what appear to be the walls of a town—possibly intended for military defences.

¹ In the church of St. Jacques-des-Guerets, Loir-et-Cher, is a fragment of early thirteenth century decoration, the *motif* of which is curiously similar to the Claverley painting. It consists of a row of mounted knights, separated by conventional trees, some mere scroll-work, others having thick stems and masses of foliage. The knights bear shields emblazoned with coats of arms, and lances with pennons in rest; their horses are richly caparisoned. In this

case, however, the picture is a semi-religious one. The leader of the knights is St. George himself, and his companions are crusaders—their names inscribed over them: S: GEORGIVS, HVGO. DE , MATHEVS: etc. They are advancing to the rescue of some Christians who have been imprisoned and maltreated by the infidels. Our Lord is shown appearing in the prison to a captive Christian.



The armour of the knights deserves close attention, for upon it depends the question of the precise date of the painting. Most conspicuous are the shields. These are a modified form of the kite-shaped shield of the Bayeux Tapestry—a type transitional between those and the “heater” shape of the thirteenth century. Here they are short and squat, with slightly curved top and curved also in section, as may be seen in Nos. 6 and 10.¹ These two bear no device; one is red, the other blue; but the shield of No. 7 has a black fleur-de-lys on its white ground. No. 11 is plain (dark red); No. 12 has an annulet  in red on a puce-coloured field (this is evidently a cognizance, and not a mere umbo); while No. 13 bears a curious object which may represent a flesh-hook, enclosed in a roughly squared figure.

The body armour of the knights is singularly varied. In every case, except perhaps No. 7, what is known as “mascle” or *quilted* armour is worn, but otherwise they present many differences.² Thus, the 2nd, 6th (9th) and 10th have coloured surcoats over their armour, yellow, blue, yellow (?) and red respectively. In the case of the last a sort of peaked hood lies over the neck, and there is a pendant loop-like object to the tail of the surcoat, which I think occurs also in the case of No. 2. Probably it really was a loop, or cord, through which the mailed leg of the warrior was slipped when he was dismounted. In riding they would be removed to give greater freedom. These surcoats, Viollet-le-Duc tells us, were introduced towards the end of the twelfth century. We see them on the seals of Richard I. and John, but not on that of Henry II. The presumption, therefore, is that they came into fashion some time in the long reign of that monarch—1154–1189.

The form of the mascle suits differs. Some are long shirts of mail, coloured white or yellow. The most

¹ The shield of Geoffrey Plantagenet (d. 1154) on his tomb slab of enamel at Le Mans is similarly curved on plan, but longer. Compare also the shields on the first and second Great Seals of Richard I.; but these latter are of a more advanced type.

² Ringed and mascle armour appear side by side in the Bayeux Tapestry. Sometimes a suit of *mixed* is shown on one man, legs and body in one sort and arms in another. This sort of mail is seen on the seal of Milo Fitzwalter (temp. Henry I.); and it continued in use till early in the thirteenth century.

complete suit is that of the gigantic figure—No. 11—falling on his head. He wears a sleeved tunic combined with short breeches of this armour, and his legs are encased in close-fitting “stockings” of the same—all tinted yellow, except, for some reason, the left leg. The right arm, which has been almost obliterated, seems to be bound round with leather thongs—like the “putties” of our South African troops. A bonnet of the mascléd quilting covers the sides and back of the head, and over this is a large flat-topped helmet with a visor. The latter is partly coloured yellow and perforated, while there is a wide slit for the eyes, of square shape, above it. The helmet and sword-blade are tinted green. Nos. 6, 12 and 13, and perhaps No. 1 (who appears also to have been represented falling from his

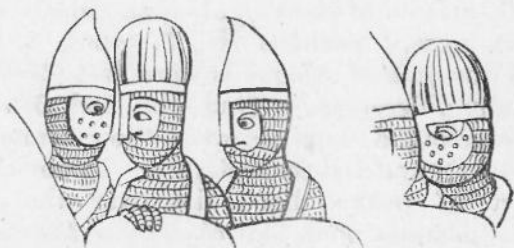


FIG. 8.—FROM A MS. FORMERLY AT STRASBURG.

horse) seem likewise to have had this flat-topped helmet over their hood of mail. The heads of the other figures are too much injured for one to say with certainty what form of helmet was painted with them, except in the case of No. 7, which is a very curious example. This knight, who is striking at his opponent's head with a sword, has no trace of mascléd armour about him,¹ but wears a short white shirt, his arms and legs being left white also. He has a steel cap of a pointed-arch shape, and beneath this a combination of nasal and cheek-piece, with a hole left for the eye. His foot in the stirrup has a long pointed solleret—meant to be of leather perhaps. In two other cases prick-spurs appear to be represented (Nos. 8 and 11). I give here for comparison (Fig. 8),

¹ The white ground *may* have been covered with crossed lines in green or yellow which have now disappeared. I could find no trace of any, however.

a copy of the late M. Viollet-le-Duc's drawing, taken from an illuminated MS. formerly in the Library of Strasburg,¹ and ascribed by that learned writer to the latter part of the twelfth century. This MS. belonged to the Rhenish school, and the resemblance which the headpieces and armour generally bear to those in the Claverley paintings is too marked to be accidental.² It furnishes another strong piece of evidence as to the date to which I have assigned the paintings, viz. circa 1170. The visors with breathing-holes and space cut out for the eye correspond very curiously. The flat-topped helmet, as is well known, was in use in the reign of Richard I. It was, no doubt, a modified form of the tall round-topped steel "bonnet" shown in this illumination. The first seal of that monarch illustrates the latter, the second the former variety.

Nearly all the knights carry lances: No. 11, besides his sword, has a lance, which he has splintered on his opponent's shield,³ while the point of the other's lance has pierced his heart. These lances bear small pennons such as are figured in the Bayeux Tapestry. The saddles are also reminiscent of those in the famous needlework. Some are red and high-cruppered; but that of the 8th horse, whose rider lies on the ground below, is yellow and quilted. Such a quilted saddle is shown in the first seal of Richard I.

A very noticeable point about the painting is the spirited drawing of the horses. Nos. 11, 12 and 13 are especially good. The first of these is extraordinarily like the horse in the bas-relief of St. George at Antioch, over the south door at Fordington Church, Dorset.⁴

Now what is the explanation of this remarkable painting? My first supposition was that it was one of a class of representations, carved and painted, that must

¹ This illumination was one of the ornaments of a manuscript of Herrade de Landsberg, its subject being Solomon lying on his bed, guarded by his warriors. Unhappily, it perished when the Library was burnt by the Prussian army in 1870. See article "*Lit.*" *Dictionnaire raisonne du Mobilier Francais*.

² Even the shape of the shields slung

round the necks of Solomon's warriors is similar, though somewhat longer.

³ There is another broken lance, in a symmetrical W shape, under the second horse from the west.

⁴ See my papers on "Hardham Church and its Early Paintings," in Vol. LVIII of this *Journal*, p. 82; and *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, XLIV, 98.

have been common in France and England during the twelfth century—the miraculous intervention of St. George in favour of the Christians at the siege of Antioch.¹ But a more searching inspection seemed to render this view improbable. There was no nimbed figure that could be identified with the saint; there were no awe-struck warriors, spectators of his supernatural prowess—as at Fordington; no band of rescued Christians; in short, none of the familiar accessories of the famous legendary picture. And if this explanation proved disappointing, others, such as the literal or mystical battles of Holy Writ, seemed even more impossible to identify with the painting.

The credit for suggesting the—as I think—true solution of the problem lies with the Vicar of Claverley, the Rev. T. W. Harvey, who claims that the scene depicted is wholly secular in character, although invested at the time when it was painted with a semi-religious halo; that it is indeed nothing more nor less than an incident in the Battle of Hastings with which the founder of the church, Roger de Montgomery, was prominently associated. It is this fact—if such it can be proved to be—and not its exceptional antiquity only, which gives this painting an altogether unique interest.

The most prominent feature in the whole strip of painting is the gigantic figure, with legs in air, falling on its head. There can be no mistaking that this prominence is intentional, and that the figure is meant to represent an exceptionally tall man.² This fact assumes a special significance in the light of a passage in Master Wace's *Roman de Rou*:—³

“The Normans were playing their part well, when an English knight came rushing up, having in his company a hundred men, furnished with various arms. He wielded a northern hatchet with the blade a full foot long, and was well armed after his manner, *being tall*, bold, and of noble carriage. In the front of the battle where the

¹ Cf. note 4, page 67.

² Assuming the height of the average figure in the strip to be 6 feet, that of the giant would be *eight*, according to my measurement! The artist purposely exaggerated, to leave no room for doubt that a very big man was represented.

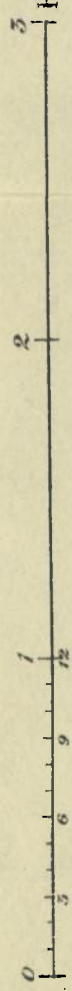
Perhaps it was with the same object in view that he drew the prostrate warrior No. 8 as small in proportion as the other is gigantic.

³ From pp. 200–201 of the translation. (*Roman de Rou*, 13387–13423 in the original.)



CLAVERTY CHURCH: EASTERN PORTION OF PAINTING ON NORTH WALL OF NAVE.

Inches



REDUCED FROM TRACINGS IN FAC-SIMILE BY PHILIP M. JOHNSTON

Normans thronged most, he came bounding on swifter than the stag, many Normans falling before him and his company. He rushed straight upon a Norman who was armed and riding upon a war horse, and tried with his hatchet of steel to cleave his helmet; but the blow miscarried, and the sharp blade glanced down before the saddle-bow, driving through the horse's neck down to the ground so that both horse and master fell together to the earth. I know not whether the Englishman struck another blow, but the Normans who saw the stroke were astonished, and about to abandon the assault, when Rogier de Montgomeri came galloping up, with his lance set, and heeding not the long-handled axe which the Englishman wielded aloft, struck him down, and left him stretched upon the ground. Then Rogier cried out, 'Frenchmen, strike! The day is ours!' And again a fierce *melée* was to be seen, with many a blow of lance and sword, the English still defending themselves, killing the horses, and cleaving the shields."

The late Professor E. A. Freeman weaves this incident into his account of the battle, in illustration of the dramatic personal encounters which were going on over a certain small wooded hill shown in the Tapestry. After mentioning the special execution done by this "gigantic Englishman" and two others, "sworn brothers-in-arms," who fought side by side, many horses and men falling beneath their axes, he says, "This account (Wace 13387-13423) is worth notice. The Englishman is at last killed by Roger de Montgomery."¹

It is a well known fact that the early writers differed as much in their accounts of the famous battle as have later writers in their glosses upon them. We need not be surprised that some doubt may be said to exist as to the fact of Roger's presence at Hastings. It has been maintained that he stayed behind to keep order for Duke William in his Norman possessions, and Ordericus Vitalis

¹ Mr. Round in a communication received respecting these paintings, after reminding me that the question whether Roger was at Hastings was fought out many years ago between Sir

H. Howorth and Prof. Freeman in the *Academy*, remarks that "the story in Wace of course could only be a tradition, but *might* quite well be true."

is quoted, inferentially, in support of this view, as against Wace.¹

But it is beside my point to argue for or against Roger's having taken an actual part in the famous battle. So far as this painting is concerned, the only important question for our consideration is as to whether the great earl, who had built Claverley Church and endowed the foundation of which it formed a part, would be popularly *believed*, a hundred years afterwards, to have been present at it. If Orderic's history is doubtful on this point, or if his observations may be construed in a contrary sense, at least we have the affirmative testimony of Wace, in whose life-time the painting may have been executed.

Master Wace, the prebendary of Bayeux, would be well known to the monks of La Sauve Majeure, and no doubt they would be entirely in sympathy with his attitude towards the Conquest. Indeed, we may suppose that towards the end of the twelfth century that great event had become in the eyes of the clergy and governing classes almost a "holy war,"—blessed, as it had been, by the Pope and crowned with success.

On the other side of the Channel, the famous Tapestry was even then used to hang round the nave of Bayeux Cathedral. Probably it had been executed to the order of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and half brother of the Conqueror, who figures so prominently in it, and who alone could have obtained a dispensation for the exhibition of a secular representation within the Cathedral.

Even in those days the fame of this embroidered history would spread far and wide, and we may well suppose that representatives of great families would desire to record the deeds of their sires at Hastings in some similar manner. And in the case of Claverley, allowing for the popular execration of Robert de Belesme, there is

¹ Ordericus Vitalis was born at Atcham, near Shrewsbury, in 1075, and educated up to ten years of age at the latter town. He was, we are told, the son of Odeler of Orleans, a married priest, who in Roger de Montgomery's train had accompanied the Conqueror to England. Although compelled to leave his native country at an early age, he always regarded himself as an exile. He is supposed to have died about 1143.

Wace, on the other hand, was born about 1120 and died about 1180. Ordericus probably wrote his *History of the Church*, in which is included the Conquest of England, between 1130 and 1141, while a monk at St. Evroul. Wace was therefore further removed in point of time from the events he wrote about. He was a court favourite, and was given by Henry II. a prebend at Bayeux.

no reason to suppose that the memory of the great Earl Roger would be looked back to with vindictive feelings. We may assume, indeed, that the clerics at least held him in grateful remembrance as the founder of the church.

In conclusion, it is my pleasant duty to acknowledge the kind assistance which I have received in preparing this paper from many friends, including the Vicar of Claverley and Mrs. Harvey, Mr. W. Wood-Bethell, architect for the restoration of the church, and his clerk of the works, Mr. Mann.

NOTE.—It has recently come to my knowledge that in restoring the church of Lydiard Tregoz, Wilts, a battle scene, said to be of Norman date, has been found painted on the walls of the nave. As this church owes its foundation to the Tregoz who fought at Hastings, the coincidence is at least suggestive.