



Architectural Notes on the Chapel of the Hospital of St. James, Tamworth

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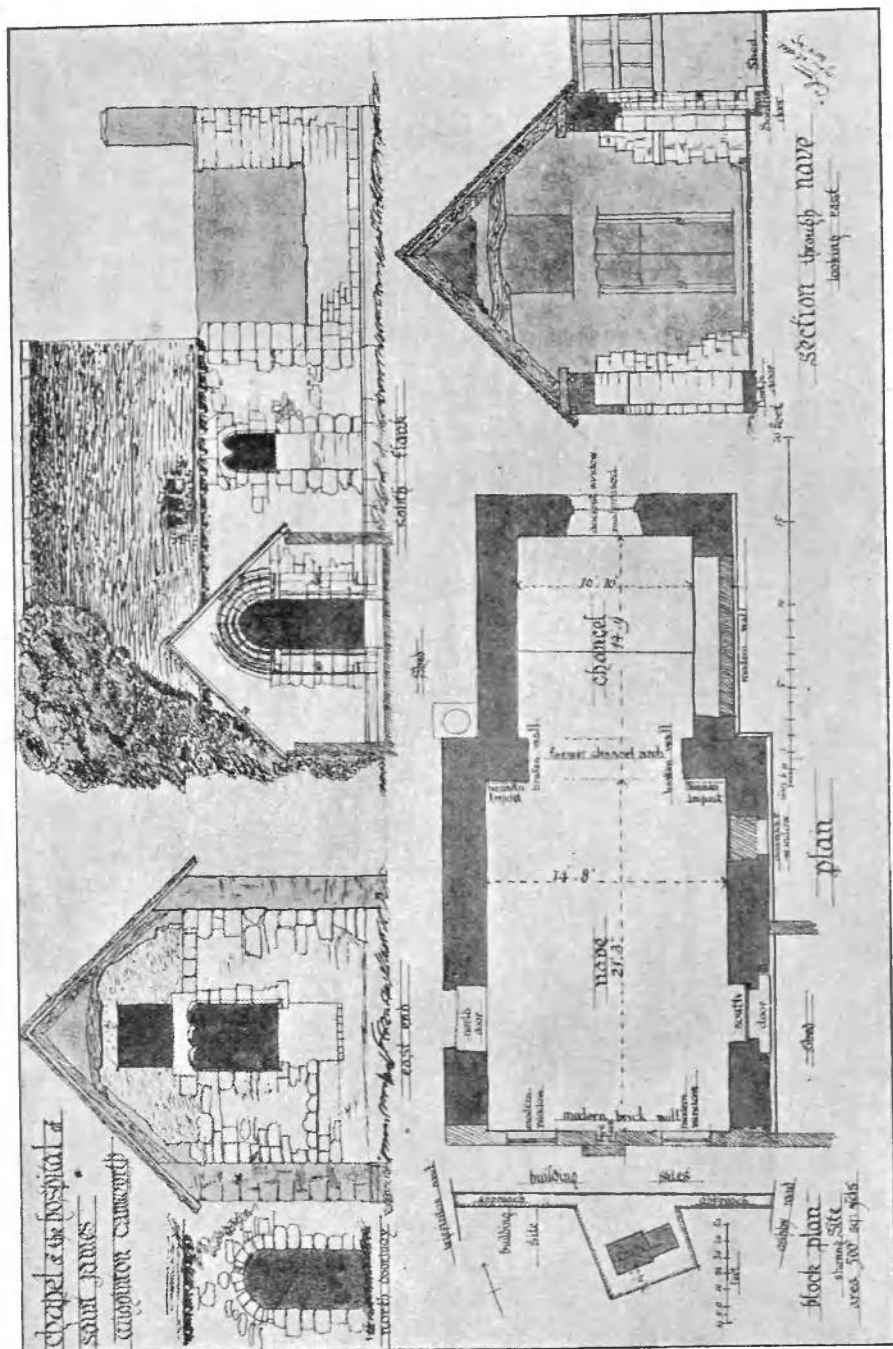
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ARCHITECTURAL NOTES ON THE CHAPEL OF THE
HOSPITAL OF ST. JAMES, TAMWORTH.

By C. LYNAM, F.S.A.

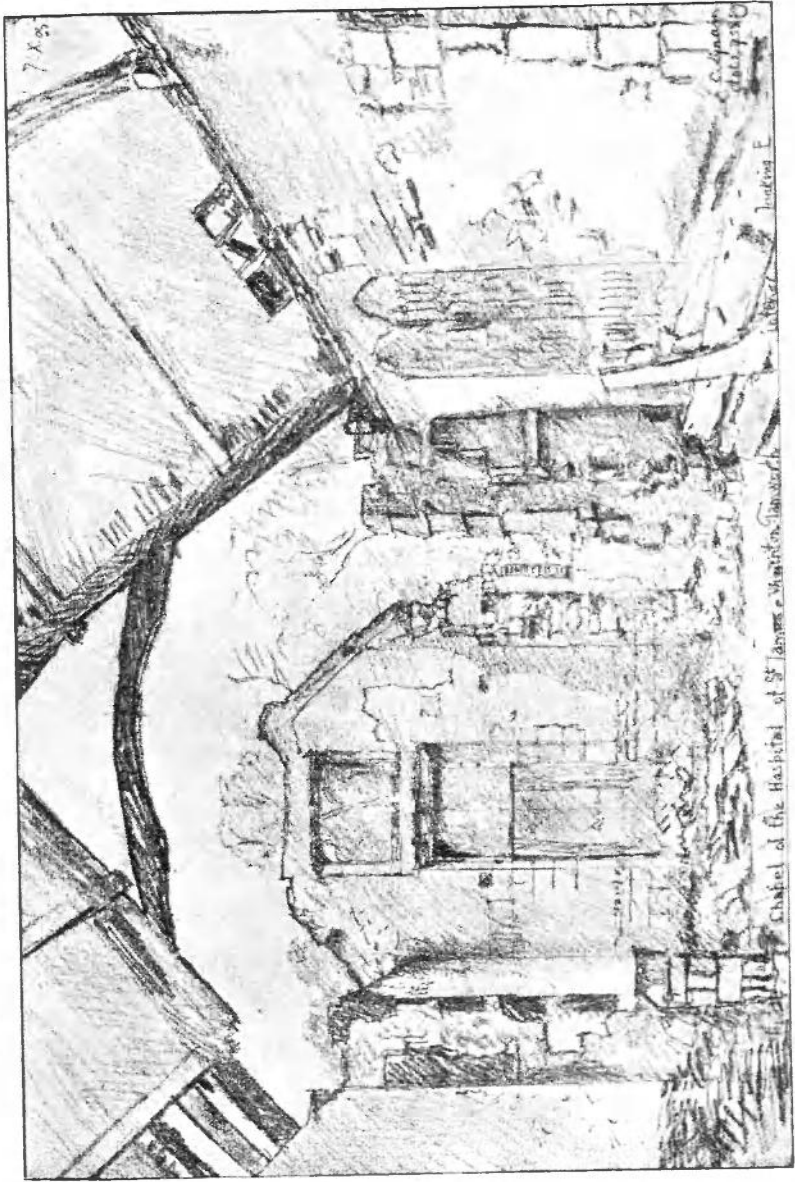
The hospital of St. James, close to Tamworth, was founded by Philip de Marmyon, who, in the year 1285, assigned property to the master of the hospital sufficient to maintain five priests to celebrate divine service there. This hospital remained to the time of Henry VIII; and in 1534, when Robert Perrott was chaplain, was endowed with lands valued at £3 6s. 8*d.* annually.

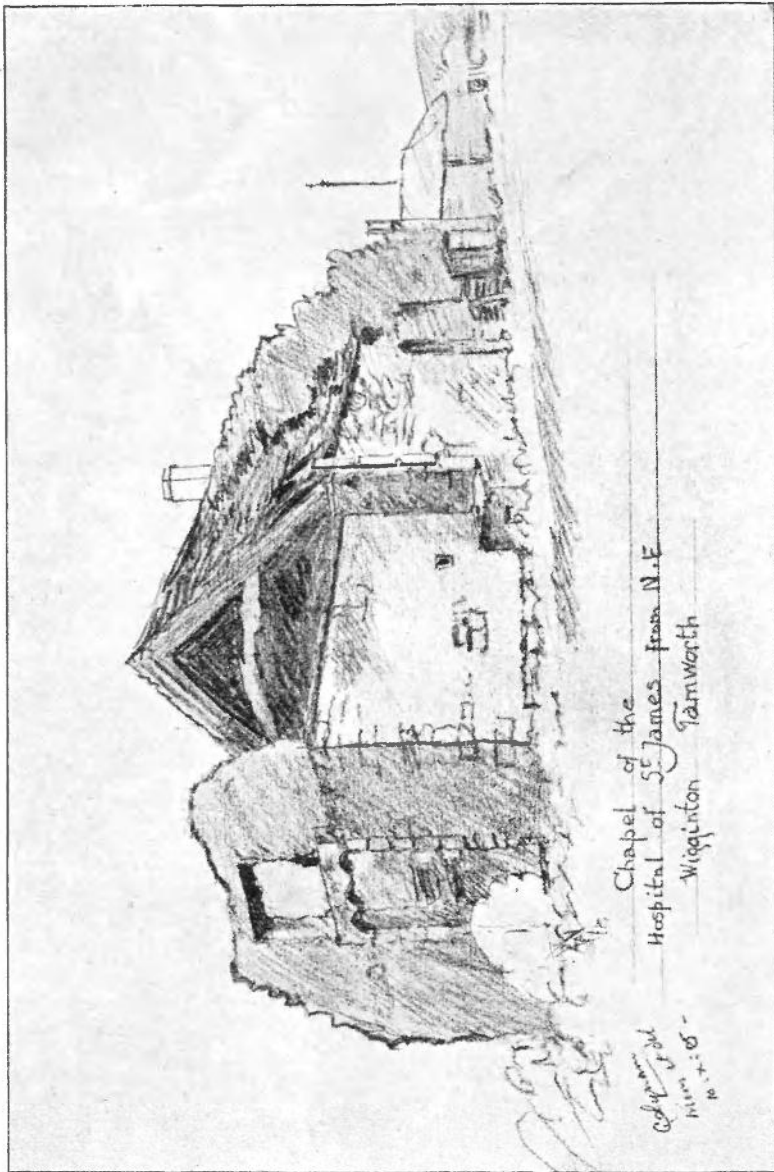
The remains of the "spital-chapel," now converted into a small dwelling house and barn, still stand at a very little distance from the northern boundary of the old borough of Tamworth. It is situate in the angle formed by the junction of the Wigginton and Ashby de la Zouch roads about two-thirds of a mile from the parish church of St. Editha at Tamworth, and is in the parish of Wigginton. Its area is in the midst of land now laid out for building purposes: in fact, it is part of a site recently purchased for building upon at a building-land price.

The owner of the land and the chapel upon it, entered upon his building arrangements with the intent of taking down the little ruin, but the interest attached to it having been brought to his notice, he has offered the land and building to a local committee of archaeologists upon generous terms which have been accepted. The purchase has been effected and the land fenced in, but lack of funds has precluded any attempt to preserve the fabric of the chapel, which after the frosts of this winter is in a dangerous condition, but it is hoped that the building may be restored to its original use and that services will be resumed and maintained.

The plan of the chapel is of the earliest and simplest

type, consisting of a nave 21 feet 3 inches long and 14 feet 8 inches wide inside, and a chancel 14 feet 9 inches long and 10 feet 10 inches wide. Its last use was that of a dwelling house, and its perversion to that purpose brought about much mischief to the original structure. Its west wall was taken down and one of bricks containing a fire-place and domestic windows was substituted. The south and east walls of the chancel were partly taken down and pierced for windows, and the south wall of the nave was broken into for the insertion of a window. The chancel arch was removed and the void in its wall made considerably wider. At the present time the chancel is roofless and that of the nave is in a bad condition. Notwithstanding all this destruction there still remains a most interesting little building bearing its own unerring testimony to its very ancient origin and to later alterations. Except the west wall all the others remain very much as they were first built. There is detail sufficient remaining to make it apparent that the chapel was built in the Norman period. The masonry of its walls, the north doorway and the remaining impost on the line of the spring of the chancel arch and the base mould on the north flank are all clearly indicative of the work of this date. The architectural feature of main interest is the south doorway, which is an insertion of an exquisite early example of the Early English period. The window south of the nave, with its head of two lights and its upper jambs of the right width for them, is also of architectural interest, and not less so is the fact that the wall beneath this window had been in early times converted into a doorway, the jambs and other features of which still remain. At the east end of the chancel the head and jambs and sill of a window of three lights are still preserved, corresponding with the window to the south of the nave, but these windows are later insertions into the early walls. It is probable that the little church depended for its window light on a few small single openings in each of its walls. The accompanying drawings and sketches roughly illustrate the architectural character of the building as it now appears, and the block plan denotes its position on the site and the approaches to it.





Chapel of the
Hospital of St. James from N.E.
Wigginton Tamworth

C. J. ...
1895

In addition to the cost of the site and building, the expense of restoration will have to be met, but the character of the work carried out will be of the strictest conservative kind, and therefore nothing more than simple repair and reinstatement will be attempted, though at the same time it must be brought up to a due fitness for church attendance.¹

¹ It is anticipated that altogether the cost of purchase and restoration will amount to £350, a very small sum having regard to the value of the structure, which

will thereby be preserved. Mr. Lynam, F.S.A., of Stoke-upon-Trent, will be happy to receive any contributions to this end.