

# Richmondshire Churches

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## PREFACE.

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IF it be true that the houses in which we dwell and the public buildings with which we are brought in contact exercise a certain influence over our minds, for good or for evil, for our pleasure or for our distress—how much more is that the case with the churches in which we worship? Our surroundings, indeed, in whatever form, constitute an ever-present factor in our lives. Consciously or unconsciously, they are our constant companions and monitors. How important, then, that they should teach us that which is true, and only that which is true. It is not too much to say of our ancient churches that they express the permanent sub-consciousness of the life of the English people. In their varied styles they reflect the changes which have passed over our national history. Sometimes grand in their loneliness, they are often imposing in their magnitude, and always impressive in the mystery which hangs over their story. “Is it a mere fancy,” asked the Archbishop of York, when preaching at the re-opening of Selby Abbey, “to suppose that in these old, quiet churches we come into closer touch than elsewhere with the Church invisible? When the crowds have left this ancient building to-day and all is still, will it be empty? Will it not be still filled with a presence, a power, and an influence deeper, greater, and quieter than our own?”

Yet if we are to form a just appreciation of any old church, we need to possess some knowledge of its architecture—a certain acquaintance with its history. What was the rudimentary form and plan of this particular fabric? At what periods were the various stages of its development achieved, and what was the occasion and import of each extension?

The varying prominence, for example, which successive ages have assigned to different phases of Christian doctrine, is reflected, in no uncertain manner, in the material structure of our churches. What kind of services were held here, and how was the building decorated and furnished, of old? Again, who have worshipped, and who have ministered within these walls? What part did they take in the great religious changes of the sixteenth century; and how was the Church served during the Commonwealth? These are questions which must be answered, if we are to read aright the lesson which an ancient church conveys to us.

It must be confessed that a lamentable ignorance of the subject has prevailed in most of our country villages, where the noblest examples of church architecture are often to be found. But there are signs, as Mr. Francis Bond tells us,<sup>1</sup> that these times of indifference and neglect are passing away. We are becoming alive to the treasures of our own country. It is, indeed, a subject for thankfulness that, in spite of all her troubles and vicissitudes, the English Church has been able to preserve and hand down to us such a priceless store of mediæval art.

“It is difficult in these days,” says Mr. E. T. Clark,<sup>2</sup> “to understand the close affection in which, in the middle ages, the parishioners held their Parish Church. When the fashion for founding monasteries passed away, about the thirteenth century, men turned to their Parish Church, and beautified it. It was associated with almost every event of their daily lives. It was, as it were, their own. It was the one place where all were on an equality, in claiming the consolation derived from its services. All could give something to it, and nearly all did. The poorest could give a trifle towards a new vestment,

<sup>1</sup> *Fonts and Font Covers*, vii.

<sup>2</sup> *The Church of St. Lawrence, Snaith*, 1904, p. 18.

or towards founding a fresh altar ; and what they gave they could see in daily use ; not hidden from sight, as in the monasteries. It is impossible to avoid regret that so many of the beautiful things which, with self-denial and labour, were provided in love for the services of God's House in the past, should have had to suffer destruction from motives, not always of the highest description. It cannot be amiss, however, to remind the present generation of the generosity and affection towards their Parish Church which was displayed by their ancestors."

In the following pages a new and untrodden district has been traversed. The ten church fabrics selected for description have been so chosen because they present, collectively, an epitome of English ecclesiastical architecture from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth century. Nothing is, perhaps, so useful, for the proper understanding of a church, as a study of its ground-plan. The plans which appear in this volume have all been measured and drawn by the Author himself, and are to uniform scale, namely, 5 ft. = 1 inch. The comparative size of the various churches is thus seen at a glance. The dates assigned upon these plans, and elsewhere in the work, are to be understood as being approximate only. No one can date a building from its architectural character alone, to within ten years, nor perhaps even twenty years, with absolute precision. But, as a matter of convenience, "about 1260" is an expression which the mind can more easily grasp than "the third quarter of the Thirteenth century," which requires a sum in mental arithmetic to find out what it means. And, in any case, it is preferable to the terms "late Early English" and "early Decorated," which are vague and indeterminate, and are, happily, becoming obsolete. The constructive art of the Fifteenth century, sometimes spoken of as "Perpendicular," is always more difficult to date than the work of the

preceding centuries, because the same forms continued so long in vogue ; and late work is to be recognised not by progress but by decline. In art, as in character, the process of deterioration is less sharply defined than that of vigorous growth. It, therefore, becomes doubly valuable when we can get historical evidence of the date of any building at this period. Fortunately, we have the original contracts for the construction of Catterick Church, 1412, and for that of the south aisle of Hornby in 1410. The chapel of St. John the Baptist at Wath Church may also be regarded as a dated building, because the licence was granted for its erection in 1327, and the chantry founded in 1332.

The pedigrees with which it has been found convenient to illustrate the text are not in any sense to be regarded as complete genealogies of the respective families to which they relate, but merely introduce so much of the manorial history as bears upon the fabrics of the churches, and the various sepulchral monuments contained within them.

The *personnel* of the clergy is interesting in many ways. They were the officials who, for the time being, were entrusted with the working of the ecclesiastical machinery of the various parishes. Owing to dearth of record, however, we labour, in Richmondshire, under much disadvantage in the endeavour to ascertain the names of the parochial clergy, or any particulars of their careers ; for comparatively few of the wills have been preserved, and none of the Archdeacons' Registers—so far as we have been able to ascertain. From other and more general sources we have, indeed, been able to glean some interesting biographical details concerning many of the incumbents, but there must be many others of whom we have no account. Truly we may say, with the writer of the Book *Ecclesiasticus* : Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. . . . . These were honoured in their generations, and were

the glory of their times. There be of them that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported. And some there be which have no memorial ; who are perished as though they had never been.

The Author's thanks are due, and are heartily offered, to the incumbents of all the parishes for the facilities so readily afforded for examining the churches and registers, and for permission to make drawings and photographs ; to Mr. William Brown, F.S.A.; Mr. Chas. C. Hodges ; Rev. H. Lawrance ; Mr. T. M. Fallow, F.S.A.; the Hon. Henry Orde-Powlett ; and the many others who have rendered him assistance by their kind advice. The photographs, which add so much to the interest of the volume, have, in most cases, been furnished by the devotion of skilled amateurs, who have freely given their services, and to whom the Author returns his best thanks. The source of each illustration is printed on the plate. The Council of the Yorkshire Archæological Society has generously lent the blocks for Plates XII, XVII, LI, and LIII ; and the block of the Wath chest (Plate XXXV) was kindly supplied by the Durham and Northumberland Archæological Society.