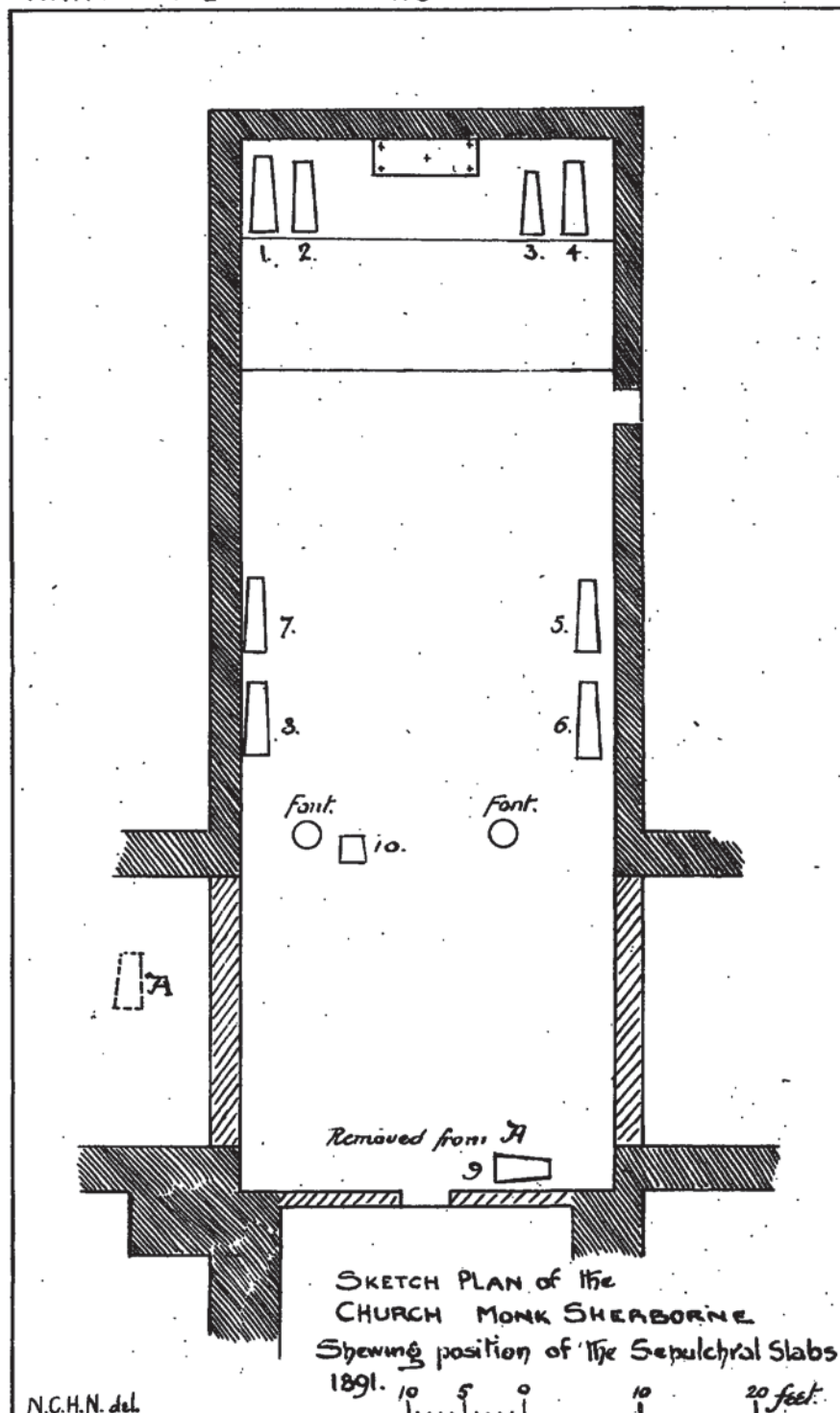




NOTICE OF SEPULCHRAL SLABS AT MONK SHERBORNE.

BY S. ANDREWS, M.R.C.S.

The following notes and accompanying illustrations are a brief record and reminder of a Club excursion in the autumn of 1890. Starting from Basingstoke station, those who took part in it passed from off the most northern edge of the chalk downs down on to the Tertiary beds of the woodland known in the olden times as the "Pambere." The track lay across fields and by farms called "North Ham," "Ockridge" and "Pabley" (from its pebbly field), passing by the site of a Celtic village as indicated by the discovery of abundance of worked flints, which, as Mr. C. Cooksey informed us, are laid bare in certain seasons. One of the large chalk pits so numerous in this neighbourhood, known as Marnel's Dell, skirts the lane down which Colonel Gage must have led his party from Oxford to the relief of Basing House. The first important stop was made at the Church of Sherborne St. John, where Mr. Shore narrated the chief points of interest that he had obtained from historic sources concerning the de Port¹ family, who later became St. Johns, and from whom the suffix name of the village is doubtless derived. The ownership of the manor was subsequently vested in the Brocas family, and is now possessed by Mr. Chaloner Chute. In a chapel on north side of the chancel are some brasses of the Brocas family, and in the

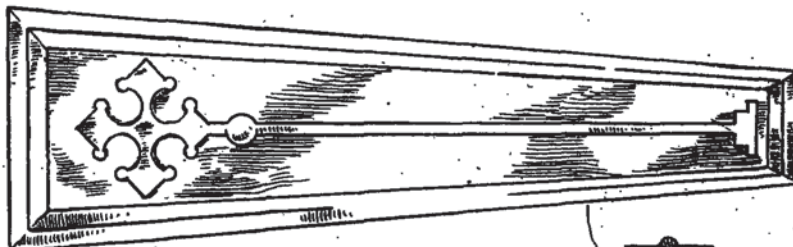
¹ Henry de Port, a baron of the Exchequer *temp* Henry I, founded the Priory of Sherborne. Adam de Port, who acquired his father's estates in 1213, assumed his mother's name St. John and dropped that of de Port.

north aisle stands an old book desk, to which are attached three chained volumes of Fox's Book of Martyrs (1641). Mr. Shore derived the name Sherborne from the Saxon "Scyr"—a division or part cut off, and Saxon "bourn"—a stream. A stream still rises out of the chalk hills, and at a point marked by the old Roman road, from Winchester to Silchester, still in use, forms a natural boundary between the open downs on the one hand and the heavily timbered woodland on the other. As to this woodland, known as "Pamber" or "Pambere," the name has been rightly explained as the *bere* or forest, which supplied a certain amount of *pannage* or food for swine, notably acorns; such terms being in common use in Anglo-Saxon times, Panbere being the hog's wood.

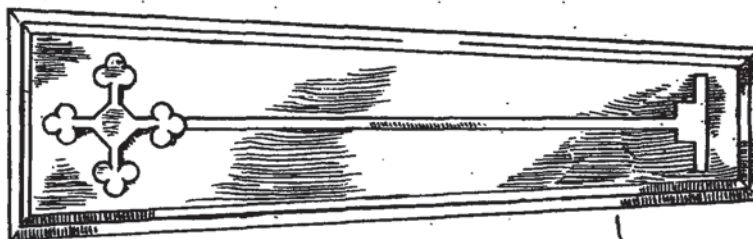
At Monk Sherborne the Rev. Canon Willes pointed out portions of Norman and other ancient work in the Church which had been discovered and preserved at the time of its restoration.

Thence to Pamber Priory Church, as it is generally called, but more properly Sherborne Priory, where the papers read told of its foundation by the de Ports as a family burial place in the time of King Henry I, and of its suppression as one of the Alien Priors in the year 1416 A.D., thus giving a definite duration to its most active life. Its subsequent preservation was the result of minor endowments for the maintenance of a chantry priest, through which circumstance it remained in more or less continuous occupation. The large revenues it possessed at the time of the general suppression were diverted by Henry VI. to Eton College, and subsequently by Edward IV to God's House, Southampton, and so passed to Queen's College, Oxford, as the *Custos Hospitalis Dei in Villa, Southampton*. The restoration of the Church to its present state, consisting as it does of only the chancel and central tower of the original building, was ably carried out in 1843 by the late Sir Gilbert Scott. No note, however, appears to have been made as to the dimensions of the original structure, which, if in proportion to the part remaining, must have been extensive far beyond what appears to the eye of the casual observer. The length of nave may be taken as indicated by the modern

inches 12 6 0 1 2 feet



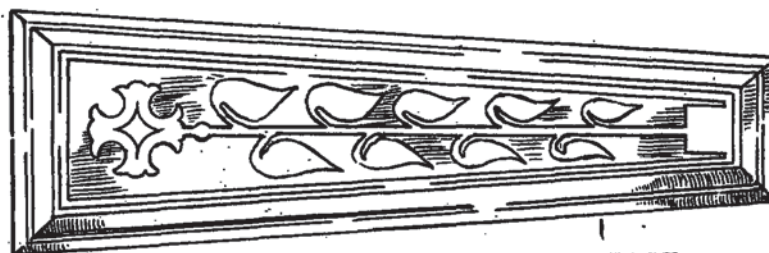
No 1.



No 2.



No 3.



No 4.



garden wall, and appears to have been about 62 feet internally. The shortened buttress-like projections of the tower show the position of transept walls. In February, 1891, an opportunity occurred, through the levelling of ground on north side for the purpose of enlarging the burial ground, of tracing the extent and character of some of the foundations of the north transept. Those exposed showed a flint and rubble wall of about 3-ft. 9-in. thick, extending, as was estimated (but not certainly measured), about 17 feet from present buttress. This would give an internal measurement of 25 feet from extreme north wall of the transept to the arch communicating with the nave, a measurement that has, probably, never before been even approximately ascertained. The width of the transept as shown by the opening of the arch appears to have been 20 feet.

On the day of the visit of the Field Club much attention was bestowed on sundry sepulchral slabs or stone coffin lids, of which many remain in various parts of the edifice. Some fragments have been worked up into the base of the older of the two fonts, others are found lying in recesses of the walls as if in their original positions, while others for better preservation have been placed within the chancel rails. Their arrangement is shown in the accompanying illustrations (Plate I). One (Plate 3, Fig. 9) has been found since the visit of the Club in Feb., 1890, during the operations before mentioned. This example was lying irregularly at the point A in north transept, and evidently not *in situ*. The slab differs from the rest, being only 4-ft. 10-in. in length, the others measuring from 5-ft. 11-in. to 7-ft. 3-in. More recently, in August, 1890, another example much smaller, only 3-ft. long, was found. There are in all ten full length stones and a half one, besides the fragments which cannot be measured. Of these ten seven have designs sufficiently defined on their upper surface to enable representations of them to be made as here given (Plates 2 and 3). The half length stone also has a fairly complete pattern. The patterns are of similar type, a staff surmounted by a cross, the arms apparently at first plain, or battle-axed form (No. 9). Others are of more decorated character (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10). No. 9 resembles 3 and 4 except that the staff is adorned with conventional

leaves in 4, alternated on either side; in No. 3 the leaves are opposite. No. 3 also has a figure of a lamb at foot, and on the bevelled edge runs the following inscription:—



✕ Siquis eris qui transieris sta perlege plora.

✕ Sum quod eris fureramque quod es pro me precor (h)ora.

These two Leonine hexameters may be thus rendered—
 “Whoever you may be who passes by, stop, read carefully, lament, I am what thou wilt be, and I was what thou art, for me I beseech you pray.”¹ In cutting the inscription the mason, to economise space, has placed some of the letters inside others; and the letter H, which is comprised in the word *ora*, indicates ignorance or the decline of Latinity. Some of the slabs have a simple bevelled edge, others a single hollow, while some have a series of hollows forming a moulding.

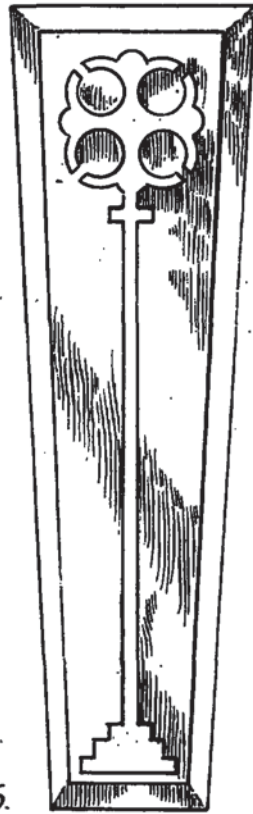
These details may be of assistance in recognising similar features in other places. At Preston Candover is a stone placed for preservation in the wall of a mortuary chamber, the survival of the chancel of the old church. Its left half shows a pattern resembling No. 10, and one whole leaf and a part like No. 4. It was possibly the work of the same mason, or had a similar origin to those at Pamber. This stone has apparently been cut narrower on one side as if to fit it to a subsequent use, and is only about 2-ft. 6-in. long. On a recent visit of the Club to Durley two similar sepulchral slabs were observed with a single bevel, measuring about 6-ft. in length, and with remains of staff, surmounted by a cross resembling No. 9. Doubtless many more are scattered about

¹ The above is probably the origin of the common jingling couplet ending with

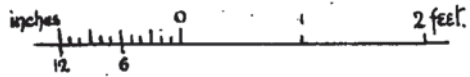
“As I am now, so shall thou be,
 Therefore prepare to follow me;”

a curious version of which will be found in Upham Churchyard, 1705—

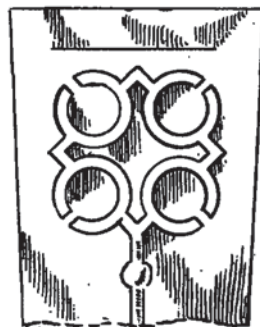
“Drae near my friends and have an i,
 As you be now so was I,
 And as I am so shall you be,
 The glass is running now for thee.”



No. 5.



No. 9.



No. 10

SECTIONS.

No. 5.



No. 9.



the county, and it would be well if they could all be recorded and compared, so as to assist in developing information as to how the patterns originated, became varied, and at what period they were adopted. Some of the patterns of those found at Sherborne have been assigned to the late Norman period.¹ This corresponds with the dates of Priory. The idea that they are restricted to tombs of Priors cannot be maintained.

It may be observed that no such stones are found at Padworth, in Berks, which was under the rule of Pamber Priory, and would lead to the inference that the latter was the place of interment for the community.

¹ From a comparison of these examples with those engraved in the "Manual of Sepulchral Slabs and Crosses, by the Rev. E. L. Cutts," it would appear that they all belong to the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, and may probably be arranged chronologically, as follows:—Nos. 9, 8, 10, 1, 2, 4, 3. [Ed.]

