



To face page 369.]

WHERWELL.

Sculptures, formerly lying in the churchyard, removed 1939 and placed in the north-west corner of Wherwell Church.

FRAGMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE AT WHERWELL CHURCH.

By T. D. ATKINSON (F.R.I.B.A. *retd*).

WHEN the parish church was rebuilt about the middle of the last century, certain fragments of architecture and sculpture, all or most of which had been inside the old building, were built into or against the north wall of the churchyard to the east of the church ; a few others were built into the walls of the Rectory stables. A list of them is appended to these notes. Last year the Rector, the Reverend A. Lewis, had the more important of them placed inside the church for better preservation and raised a fund to cover the cost. The Field Club contributed to the fund and took an active interest in the scheme. I was asked to advise upon and superintend the work, which was carefully and successfully carried out by Messrs. Blackwell & Moody of Winchester, masons.

The recumbent fifteenth (?) century effigy of a nun, doubtless one of the abbesses of the Benedictine nunnery of Wherwell, was placed on a low pedestal in a central position near the west end of the north aisle. It had lain in an arched recess in the churchyard wall and had perhaps so lain when in the church. The arch is fourteenth century and is elaborately cusped. It had been not very skilfully put together after its removal from the church, and would have been very difficult to reconstruct accurately. In any case it is fragile and would have broken and crumbled a good deal in the process. It was therefore left in position in the churchyard wall. The head of the figure rests on a pillow which was held by angels ; the hands of one of them remain. The feet rest on a crouching animal.

The high tomb of the sixteenth century was placed against the north wall of the aisle near the effigy. It is that of Sir Owen West, Knight, and Mary his wife, and is dated 1551. It bears an inscription and two shields of arms.

A small sculpture in relief dating from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries : the Harrowing of Hell, and Our Lord appearing to the Magdalen in the Garden.

Another small relief, fifteenth century, with the figure of an angel and a large leaf or flower, perhaps a spandrel and a crocket.

A square block of stone, 13½ ins. by 13½ ins. by 2ft. 9 ins., which had been shaped into a corbel in the Middle Ages. It had been previously carved with an interlacing pattern showing it to have formed part of the shaft of a large cross of the seventh or eighth century. There is a similar fragment at Priors Barton, Winchester.

These are the only known examples of such crosses in the County ; the two nearest are at Amesbury (also a fragment not standing) and Ramsbury, both in Wiltshire. The accompanying map shows the distribution of the known crosses and fragments of this class and the remarkably narrow limits of that distribution. The sites of the Hampshire fragments slightly extend eastwards the Somerset and Wiltshire group which terminates the long chain beginning in Scotland.

Part of the base of the pier of an arch, early sixteenth century, with small shields bearing the inscriptions : THŌS : BEŌW ; and IHĀE BEŌW (two stones).

Part of a fourteenth century gravestone with remains of marginal inscription in Lombardic characters.

SCHEDULE OF FRAGMENTS.

In or against the Churchyard wall.

Capital of column.

*Corbel with early carving on sides (cross shaft).

*Relief with angel.

*Two bases of respond.

*Relief with subjects : "Harrowing of Hell," and "Noli Me tangere."

Two pieces of gablet with cusped arch.

*Effigy of Abbess.

Arched and cusped canopy (over last).

*Foot of grave slab with inscription.

*High tomb, 7ft. 6ins. long.

Three small pieces of ornament.

In end of Vicarage stable.

Human head.

In Stable.

Fragments now forming part of a fireplace and built in over it.

In Gable of Stable.

Parts of cusped window-head.

In Churchyard.

Stone coffin.

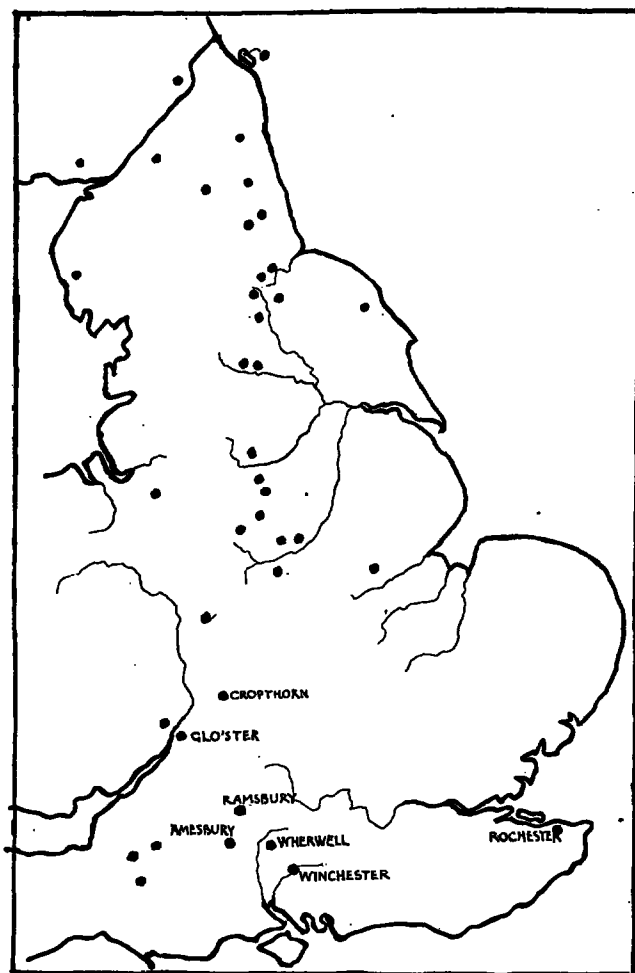
Carved spandrel.

In Priory Grounds.

Two grave slabs.

Tablet with inscription.

* Moved into the church.



England showing the present distribution of Crosses of the seventh and eighth centuries.