

CHURCH OF SAINTS MAEL AND SULIEN, CWM, FLINTSHIRE.

By HAROLD HUGHES, Esq., A.R.I.B.A.

THE small village of Cwm is picturesquely situated, with a well-wooded background, on the foot of the hills rising on the eastern side of the Vale of Clwyd, and is distant about three or four miles from St. Asaph and Rhuddlan respectively.

The church is a parallelogram, and, the roof being modern, there is no architectural division between the nave, chancel, or sanctuary, otherwise than by successive flights of steps. The external dimensions are 88 ft. 6 in. by 26 ft., and the internal 79 ft. 5 in. by 20 ft. On the south side a simple porch has been added. The ground rises rapidly from west to east. The most important entrance is at the west end. It is approached by a flight of four steps, the lower having excessively high risers. (See plan of church, Fig. 1, and the western entrance in detail, in Fig. 2.) Within the church, the level of the floor at the western end is reached by a second flight of three steps. Immediately east of the south entrance there is a rise of two steps to the level of the nave proper. The chancel is raised three steps above the nave, and two further steps are placed before the sanctuary. Whether all the steps occupy their original positions is uncertain; but it is evident that the ancient floor-levels approximately corresponded with those existing. The windows rise correspondingly from west to east. The rough paved floor of the western division doubtless coincides with the ancient floor-level at this end of the church.

The lower part of the western wall is 6 ft. 6 in. in width. Above the doorway, a deep weathering of wrought stone, running the length of the western end,

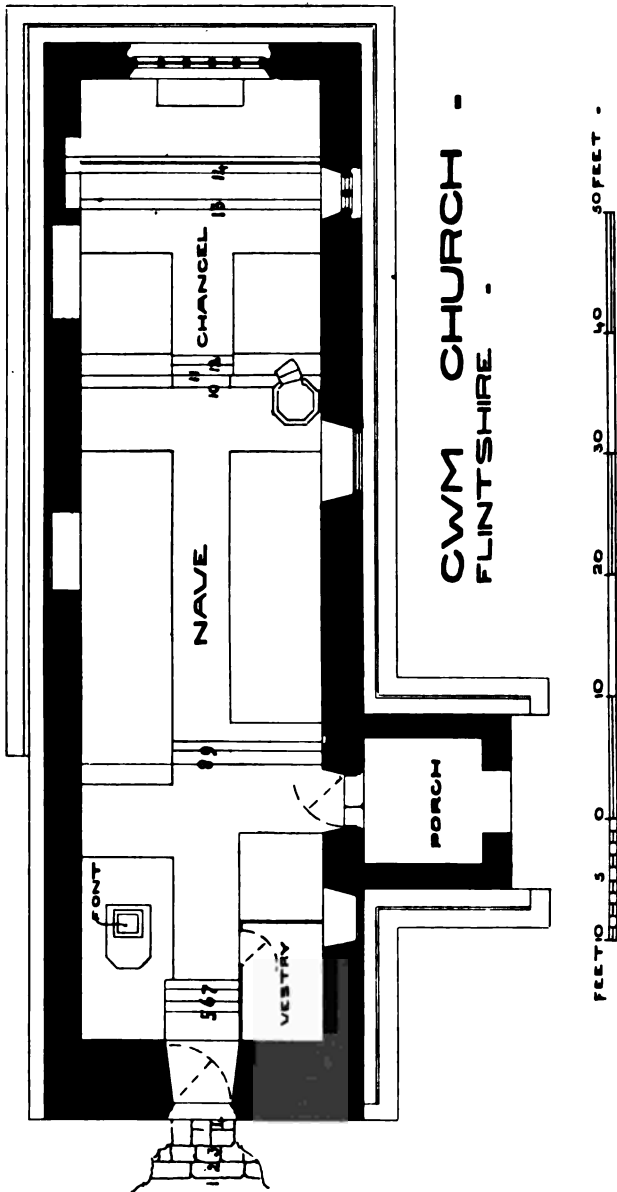


Fig. 1.

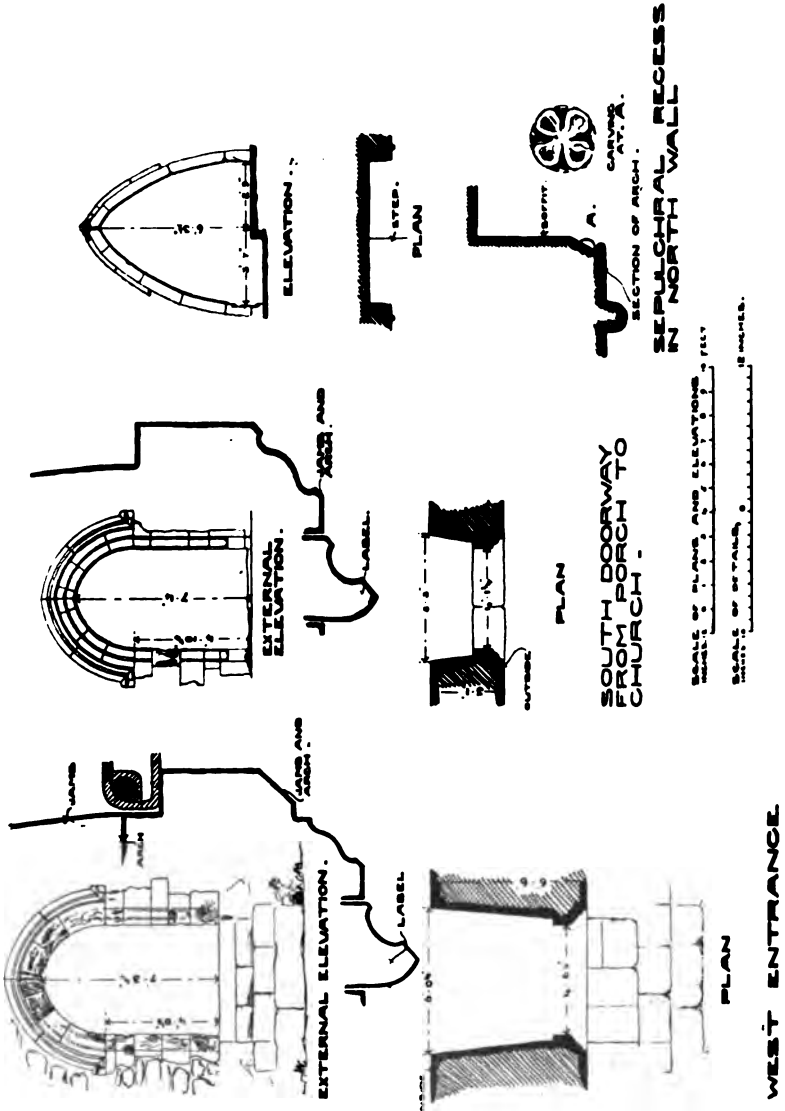


Fig. 2.—Cwm Church, Flintshire.

reduces the width by 2 ft. The gable is terminated by a bell-gablet, arranged for two bells.

The church is lighted by six windows—one in the eastern, two in the northern, and three in the southern wall. The windows belong to four different periods. In the northern wall, opposite the end of the altar-rail, is a sepulchral recess. In the south wall, to the east of, and close to, the entrance from the porch, are the remains of a simple stoup.

The structure appears to be of one period: the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. To this period belong the two entrance doorways, the eastern window, and the window in the south wall of the chancel. The sepulchral recess in the north wall is composed of stones of an earlier date. The detail is rude and simple. The four-lobed flowers on the soffit, near the outer edge, placed about 5 in. apart, centre to centre, are characteristic of fourteenth-century work (see Fig. 2). The apex of the arch is considerably to one side of the centre of the opening. The voussoirs do not follow the curve of the arch. Portions of a rude hood-moulding remain over the upper part of the arch. The general appearance is that of old stones re-used, and set in a manner not originally intended.

The general character of the two entrance doorways is identical. The sizes of the openings vary but slightly. Each doorway has an obtuse two-centred arch. The label-mouldings are worked to the same section. The arch and jamb-mouldings of each doorway are continuous. The wave moulding appears in both instances, but in the western entrance it is employed in connection with a plain chamfer. The stonework, especially of the western entrance, has suffered greatly from the weather.

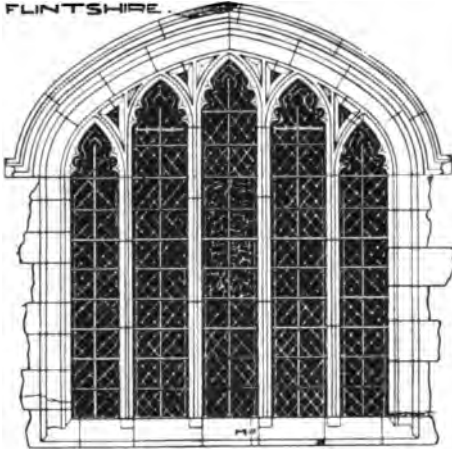
The mouldings of the eastern window, and the window in the south wall of the chancel, are identical. The label-mouldings correspond with those over the entrance doorways. The mullions have hollow chamfers. The outer jamb, arch, and head-mouldings contain a deep hollow, while the inner are splayed. The east

window (Fig. 3) has five lights, contained under a four-centred arch. All the lights extend to the containing arch. The head of each light is pointed, and has cinquefoiled cusping. The mouldings of the mullions do not die on the sill, but have square blocks, equal to the breadth and depth of the mullions, left on the sill-stones to receive them. This window is erroneously described in *The History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, p. 287, as "Early English." The south window of the chancel (Fig. 4) is comparatively small, and consists of two lights, each with cinquefoiled cusped arches, contained under a square head.

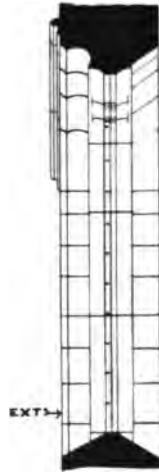
Towards the west end of the south wall of the nave is a window differing in character, but probably of near date to the two windows described above. It is shown in Fig. 5. The window is raised a considerable height above the floor-level. Probably it does not occupy its original position, but has been placed at the present high level with the idea of partially lighting a western gallery. The design is that of two trefoil-headed lights. The jambs and mullions are simply chamfered. There is no enclosing order on the exterior, as in the case of the former windows. A rough relieving arch of local stone is built over the square head. The internal head consists of a stone slab, probably an old tombstone.

The two windows in the northern wall probably belong to the very late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. In all likelihood this wall originally was blank. In any case, the two windows were formed to obtain extra light. The eastern window is shown in Fig. 5. Both windows resemble each other in general design. The eastern contains four, the western three lights. The heads of all lights are three-centred. The square-headed label-moulding over the eastern is absent from the western. The masonry above the internal heads was supported on oak lintels, but these had entirely decayed. The stones of the jambs are set on edge, and, therefore naturally were in a very dilapidated condition.

CWM CHURCH
FLINTSHIRE

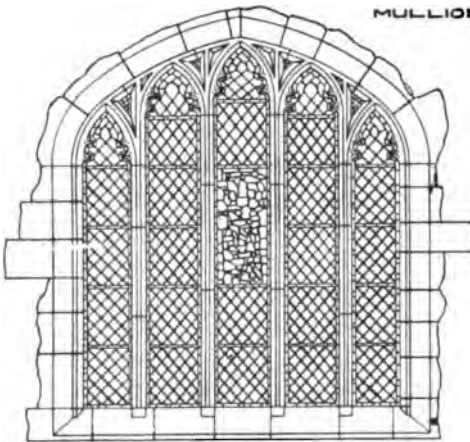


EXTERIOR
ELEVATION



SECTION

MULLIONS ARE MODERN



INTERIOR
ELEVATION

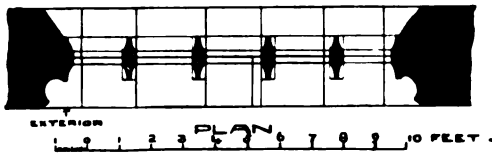
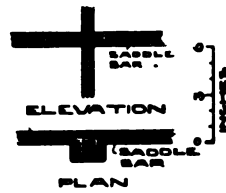
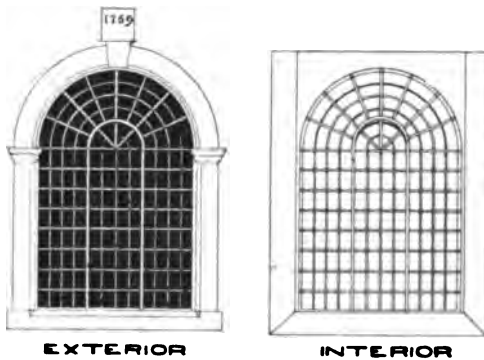
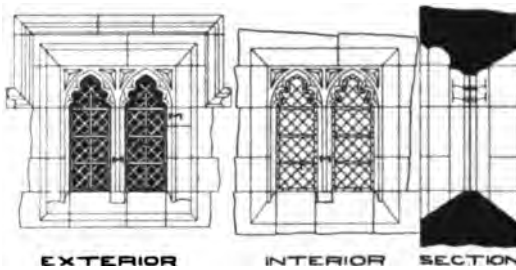


Fig. 3.

In 1769 the congregation desired further light. For this purpose, the large round-headed window was in-

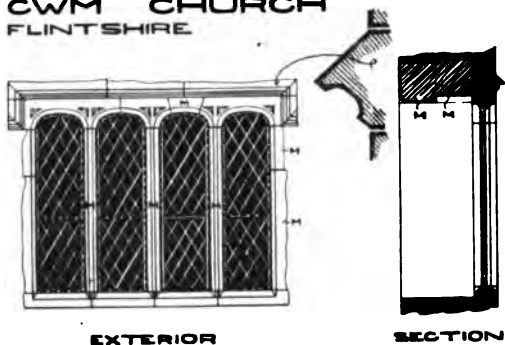


INCHES 12 0 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 FEET.

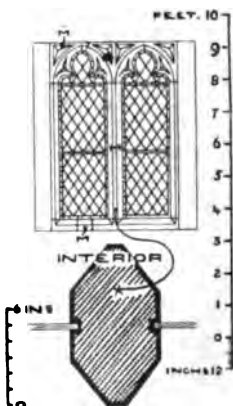
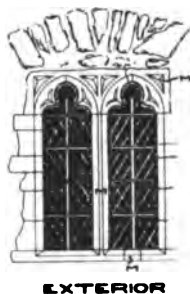
Fig. 4.—Cwm Church, Flintshire.

serted in the south wall (see Fig. 4). The jambs have small moulded caps on the exterior, and the arch has a keystone, over which, on a separate stone, is inscribed the date. The glass in lead frets is fixed but

CWM CHURCH
FLINTSHIRE



WINDOW IN NORTH
WALL OF CHANCEL.



WINDOW IN SOUTH WALL
NEAR WEST END.

Fig. 5.

slightly set back from the outer wall-face, and is supported by a framework of wrought iron. The iron stanchions and saddle-bars in the three earlier windows,

as usual, were on the outside of the glazing. The windows in the north wall had stanchions only, two to each light, and these were placed inside the glazing. The iron framework of the 1769 window was internal. Slips of iron were placed externally to keep the glazing in position. These had decayed, though the framework remains as good as ever.

The porch is of late date, and lacks interest.

Fragments of painted glass, to the extent of one hundred and twenty pieces, remain. They, doubtless, are of the same date, and form portions of the original glazing of the east window and the window in the south wall of the chancel. All the fragments have been re-leaded, forming a panel in the centre of the east window. They may be noticed in the elevations, Fig. 3. In several instances the colouring is almost entirely worn off the glass. Illustrations of all the most important pieces are here reproduced. In a recent Academy lecture, Professor Aitchison remarked: "Some wags have published books of old stained glass, where nothing is given but the outlines in black and white: as colour is *the* point in stained glass, we might as well have a book of the Greek statues, in which the colour is given without the shape."¹ I have endeavoured to impart something of the feeling of the colour into my ink sketches. For the rest the verbal description, I fear, must suffice. The glass employed is clear, for the most part of a greenish tint; portions of the glass, in many cases, being stained yellow in places, while certain pieces are yellow throughout. A few fragments are of a richer and deeper colour. A brown chocolate has been employed in the painting, giving the effect of a grey tone when seen against the light.

The fragments illustrated are as below:—

Figs. 6 and 7.

A. A portion of a chalice, with bell, short stem, ornamental knob, and several-sided foot. The latter bears the monogram

¹ *Journal R. I. B. A.*, 1904, p. 64.

thc. The base of the foot has trefoiled terminations. A zigzag pattern occupies the background. The glass is a light green; the chalice is stained yellow. Painting of chalice is with chocolate paint, and of background with white. Some portions are much worn, especially the lower right-hand corner.

B. The head of a crozier. Yellow-tinted glass. Brown paint; varies from light to dark; the paint is much worn.

c. Head of an ecclesiastic, with tonsure. Greenish-tinted glass; under hair stained yellow. Painted with brown chocolate of different degrees of depth.

D. A head, with curling hair. An angel, or young man? The collar of the dress is embroidered. Glass greenish tint, stained yellow under hair. Paint brown, varying in depth.

E. The head, apparently, of an old man, much troubled. Yellow tint across clear green ground, from neck to left eye and forehead. Painting as above.

F. A portion of a figure, with folded hands as if in prayer. Glass greenish ground. Painting as above. All slightly shaded.

G. A foot. The ground appears to be covered with rich foliage (plants or long grass). Green ground, stained yellow under plants, and appears to have been covered with a brownish paint, which has been scraped off to form plants.

H. Central portion of a figure, with dress held in at the waist. Arm slightly bent and hand falling listlessly. Greenish glass; chocolate outlines; brownish shading. Texture obtained over whole with white (?) paint.

Figs. 8 and 9.

I. Portion of a wing (?) Yellow ground; light at bottom, deepening to a deep red orange towards the top. Paint brown; that on the right is very dark, giving the appearance of black.

J. A foliated pattern on blue ground.

K. A foliated pattern on crimson ground. The brown paint of leaves gives the appearance of deeper crimson.

L. The sun? Ground yellow, varying in depth. The background smudged with paint, scratched off in zigzag lines, showing light on dark ground.

M. Flames (?) Green ground, stained yellow, excepting right-hand portion. Nearly all shaded.

N. A scene, probably from representation of the Judgment Day. A figure in a shroud, with upraised hands, rising from a coffin, ornamented on the outside with dots. Background: flames,

grass, or flowers. Greenish ground; background and edge of coffin, yellow stain. Outlines: dark brown, having the appearance of black. Shading of various depths.



Fig. 6.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

o. A pattern formed of circles, on one edge of glass. Greenish ground; ornament tinted yellow. All clear glass seems to have had a coat of paint.

- p. Flames (?) Greenish glass ; portions stained yellow.
 q. A hand.
 r. Ornament, on greenish ground.



p.

q.



r.

Hand Hugues.

Fig. 7.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

- s. Ruby glass, shaded.
 t. A barrel-shaped article, with end ornamented with quatrefoil. Ends of cusps have trefoiled terminations. The fingers of a hand appear in one corner. Ground yellow, varying in depth. Painting as above.

Figs. 10 and 11.

U. Canopy work. Glass green, with portions, bands, finials, crockets, etc., stained yellow. Whole of glass has apparently

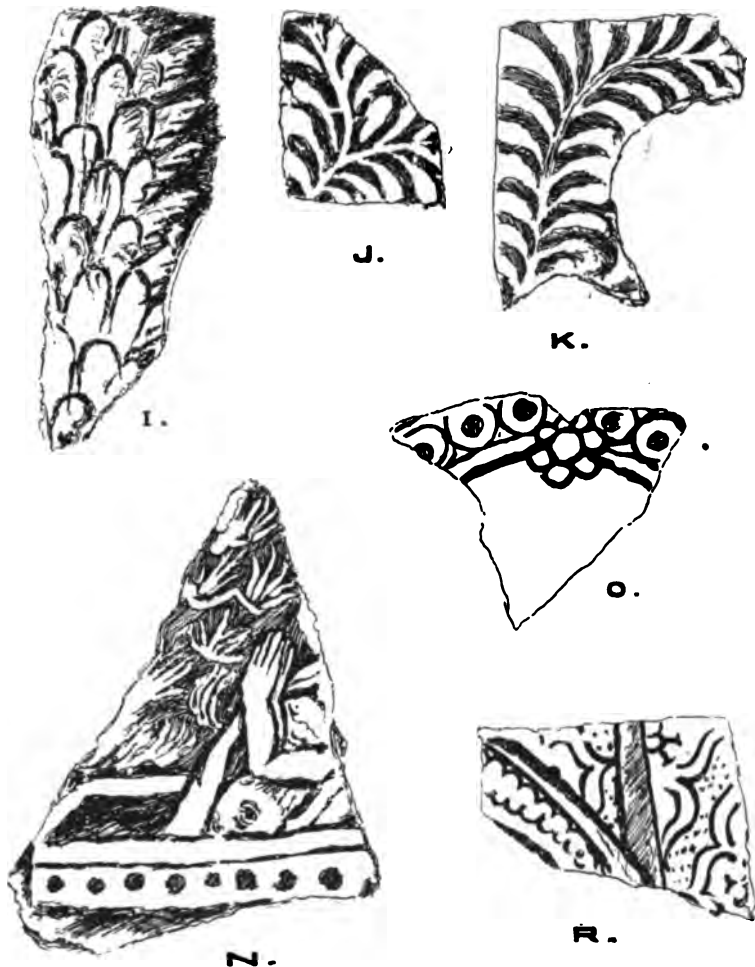


Fig. 8.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

been covered with a layer of light paint. Much of the painting of this piece of glass has been worn away. The outline of left portion can only be faintly traced.

v. A wavy border Brown paint on gold.

w. Portion of cusping (?), containing trefoiled panel. Greenish glass, many portions stained yellow. Possibly the painting on the left is intended for a wing.



Fig. 9.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

x. Rude cinquefoil arches, with quatrefoiled circles above. Clear green glass. Dull yellow circles, arches, and tracery, obtained by means of dabbing paint on back of glass.

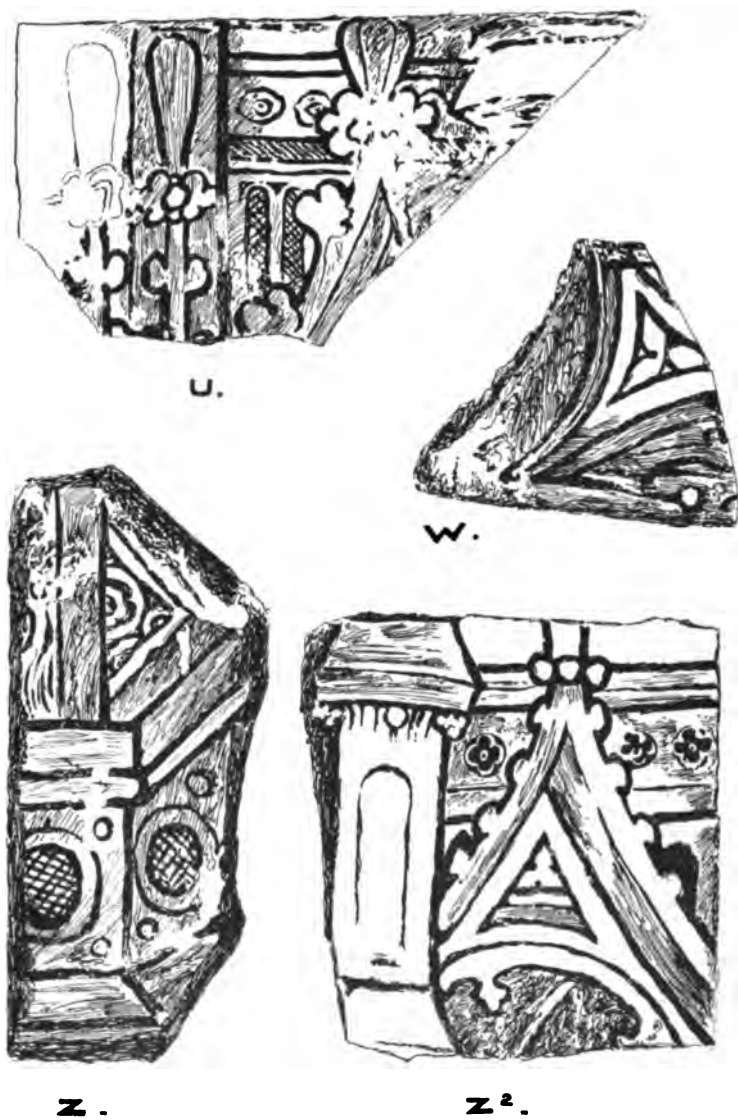


Fig. 10.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

y. Portion of canopy. Green ground, with portion stained yellow.

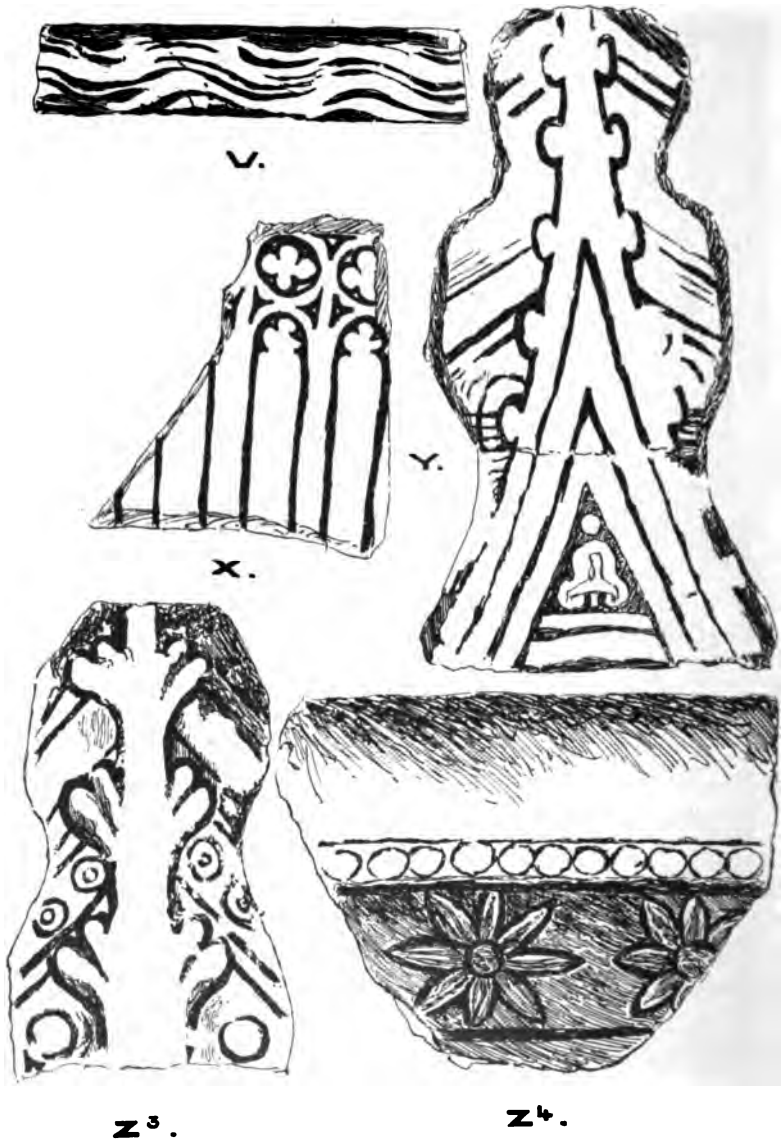


Fig. 11.—Fragments of Glass in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

z. Possibly portion of pedestal or chest. Greenish glass. Circles, some bands, and other portions, stained yellow. Left

upper portion apparently intended for flames. Gold deepening to deep orange towards top.

z². Canopy work. Greenish ground ; portions stained yellow.

z³. Canopy work. Glass as above.

z⁴. Border, with two bands : outer of small circles and inner of star-shaped figures. Green glass. Upper portion stained yellow, and shaded with brown paint. Band of circles has yellow ground.

The quality of work is most unequal. The heads especially are drawn in a manner, and with care, apparently far beyond the capability of the workers of some of the inferior glass.

In the middle of the last—or nineteenth—century, work, more in the way of destruction than “restoration” was undertaken in connection with the church. The ancient oak roof probably disappeared at this time, and was replaced by one of deal. Unsightly pews, pulpit and fittings, stained a horrible red, were erected. A modern gallery at the west end, which until recently existed, may probably have belonged to this period. Probably at the same time the old internal plastering of the walls was hacked to form a key for new plastering.

The fabric being again in need of considerable repair, in 1901 certain works were undertaken through the instrumentality of the Vicar, the Rev. T. Major Rees, who was greatly aided in his work by the help and personal interest taken by the Bishop of St. Asaph. The gable above the eastern window was badly cracked and bulged. It was found necessary to reset the tracery and the window arch, with the exception of the springer-stones, and to rebuild the wall above the east window. Some stones in all, with the exception of the 1769 window, were decayed to such an extent that it was necessary to replace them. The few new stones are marked by the letter M on the drawings. Only those stones which were in an extreme condition were renewed. The decayed wood lintels of the northern windows were replaced by stone. The ex-

ternal stanchions and saddle-bars were corroded through, and, unfortunately, had to be renewed. The glazing is modern, with the exception of the ancient fragments re-leaded in the centre of the eastern window. Probably the windows had been re-glazed, to a great extent, in the "restoration" of fifty years ago; but the lead frets were again in a very bad condition and much of the glass broken. The church being extremely damp, the external ground was excavated, and a channel formed round the north, east, and south walls. The earth had accumulated—in the way usual in churchyards—against the external walls. The unsightly modern western gallery, no longer required, was removed. The open wooden floors under the seats had been attacked by dry-rot. The space below the floors was therefore filled in, and solid floors constructed. The pews and wooden fittings were retained, but they, together with the roof-timbers, were stained green. The walls were re-pointed outside. A large extent of the internal wall plastering was in a very decayed state, and had to be removed and renewed. In carrying out this work the ancient plastering was brought to light. The surface, however, had been terribly hacked, and was in an advanced state of decay. It was found impossible to preserve it. A sufficient extent of ancient surface was exposed to show that all walls had apparently originally been decorated. The scheme was that of black-lettered wording within decorated borders. On the east wall, to the north of the window, could be traced

“ pray ye . . ther which art in ”

This evidently is taken from Matt., vi, 9. “ After this manner, therefore, *pray ye Our Father which art in,*” etc.

The lettering consisted of black letters on a white ground, contained in an orange-coloured border, decorated with red streaks at right angles to, and between, two black lines. At a lower level, and on other portions of walls, there were signs of a yellow

decoration. Specimens of the letters are given in Fig. 12.

The church contains three sepulchral slabs, all more ancient than the structure.

The lower portion of the slab, Fig. 13, has disappeared. The remains of the stem of a cross can be traced in incised lines down the centre of the stone. The head of the cross is contained within a sunk circle,



Fig. 12.—Lettering on Walls.

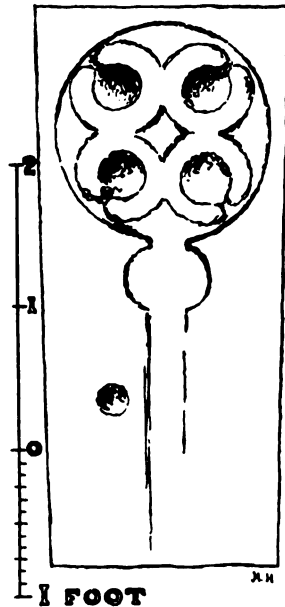


Fig. 13.—Sepulchral Slab.

Cwm Church, Flintshire.

and consists of four raised incomplete circles, set diagonally, and touching each other. The stone is too far worn to ascertain whether the circles were in any further way worked. The cross-stem has a knop immediately below the head. There is a small circular sinking to the left of the stem. The slab had been used in the floor of the porch; but it has now been taken into the church and erected against the west wall.

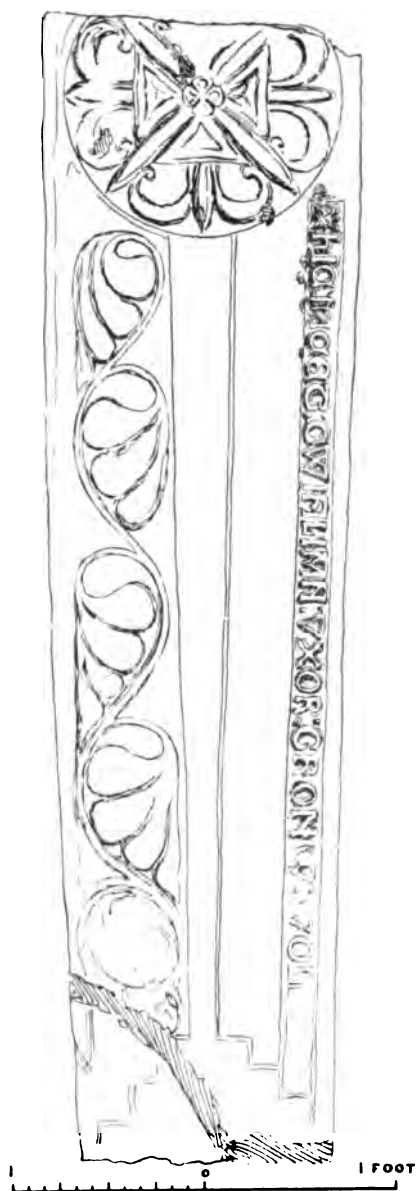


Fig. 14.—Sepulchral Slab in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

The sepulchral slab, Fig. 14, was lying loose on the floor of the church. It has now been set erect, against the west wall, behind the font. The slab contains a cross, with a three-stepped calvary, a stem widening towards the top, and a foliated head, contained within a circle. A Maltese cross, with a four-lobed flower in the centre, occupies the middle of the cross-head. Between the arms of the Maltese cross are narrow leaves set diagonally, and beyond the arms are leaves arranged as in the *fleur-de-lys*. On the left of the stem is a running band of foliage. An inscription is carried down the other side the stem, near the edge of the stone. It runs :—

“HIC : IACET : GWIALIMA : UXOR : GRONW : VO[. . .].”¹

The top of the stone is missing. The lower left corner is broken off. The slab in character resembles the “Ellena” slab at Newborough, illustrated in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, 1895.² The latter differs in that the head is contained within a square, the two sides of the stem are parallel, and the running band of foliage is missing. The slab is of fourteenth-century character. The carving is shallow, and the execution of no very high order.

Fig. 15 is the lower portion of a sepulchral slab, now set against the west wall. An inscription runs down the centre, returns along the bottom and partially up the left edge of the stone. It reads :

“[HI]C IACET : HOWEL : AP : H [. . .] AP : MAREDUD.”

The T in IACET is reversed. A sword occupies the right division of the stone, and three four-lobed flowers, near the base, are doubtless inserted to give balance to the general composition. A running band of foliage,

¹ Professor J. E. Lloyd, to whom I have submitted a drawing of this slab, writes:—“I am inclined to think GWIALIMA is the graver’s way of spelling what was given as Gwenliana, i.e., GWENLLIAN. It certainly cannot be brought into closer relation to any other ordinary Welsh female name.”

² *Arch. Camb.*, Ser. 5, vol. xii, p. 120.

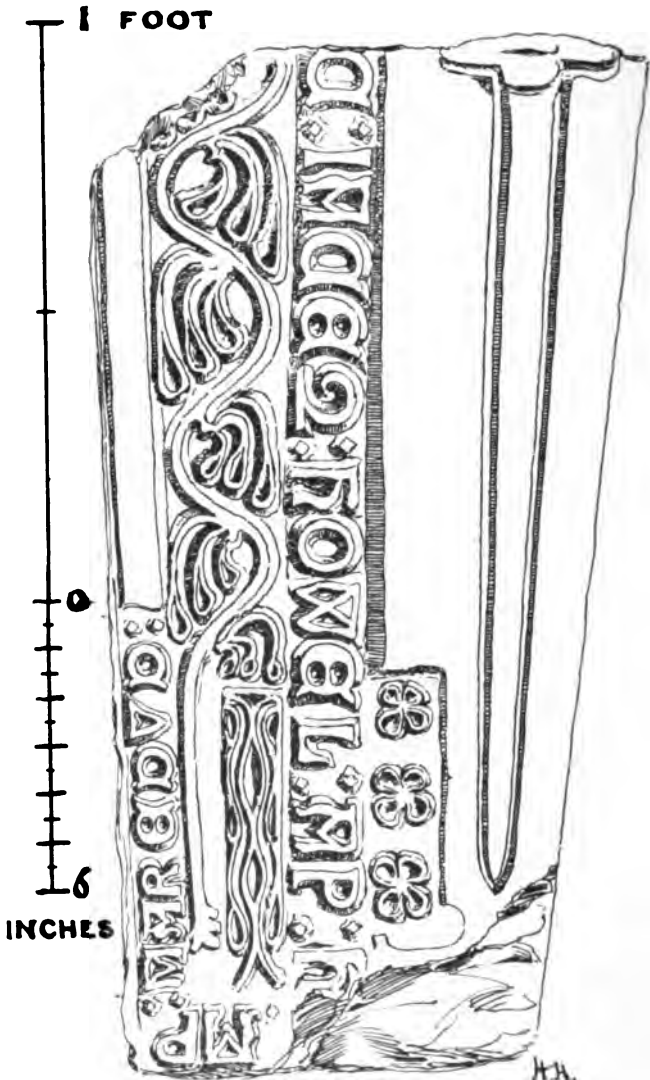


Fig. 15.—Sepulchral Slab in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

starting from a diminutive root, occupies the left side of the stone. The character of the slab is that of fourteenth-century workmanship.

Fig. 16 illustrates the remains of a most interesting crucifix. The same figure, carved in almost identical lines, appears on the front and back faces of the stone. The heads are missing. The figures are thick-set. The arms were extended on separate stones (now missing), dowelled to the main stem. The heads appear to have reclined on the right shoulders. The ends of the flowing hair fall over either shoulder. The drapery about the loins is knotted on the right side. The feet are placed side by side. The stone is laminated, and,



Fig. 16.—Remains of Crucifix in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

as necessary in works of this nature, the beds are vertical, and therefore specially liable to deterioration. The stone was built in a wall in the vicarage garden, exposed to all weathers. It has now being placed on a bracket inside the church, against the west wall.

The old coffer, Fig. 17, is solidly constructed, with bottom, ends, front, back, and top of solid oak boards, bound together with wrought-iron straps, and strengthened, at a later date, by strips of lighter iron. The top is in two divisions: one having a small slit, evidently intended as a money-receiver. The two halves have been provided with locks, but originally the lids

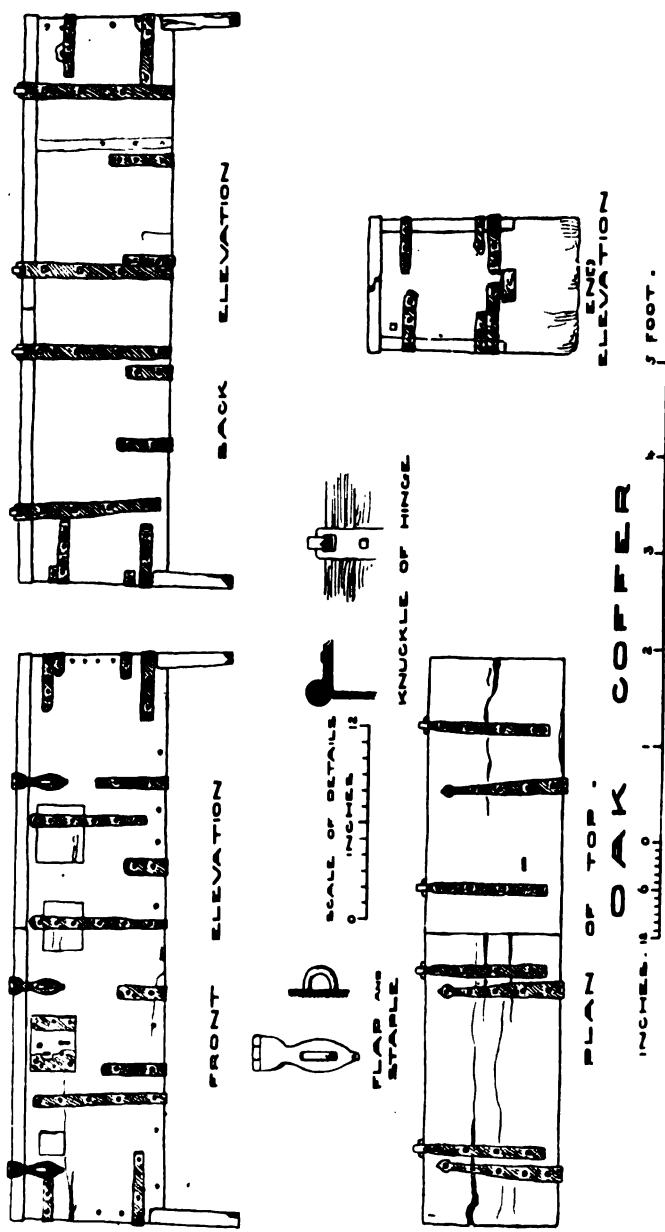


Fig. 17.—Oak Coffin in Cwm Church, Flintshire.

would have been secured, either by separate padlocks through the three staples, or by means of an iron bar inserted through the staples and secured at the end. Large scaled details of the knuckle of the hinge, the staple and flap, are given. The chest would probably be of seventeenth-century workmanship.

Fig. 18 represents the key of the south door, showing a shank of unusual length.

During the carrying out of the recent repairs, the workmen came across a brick vault under the northern portion of the sanctuary. Within it lay three lead coffins. According to tradition, a former Vicar and his

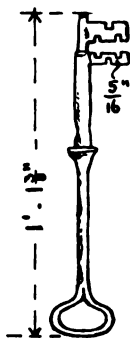


Fig. 18.—Key of South Door of Cwm Church, Flintshire.

two wives are said to have been buried in this position. The vault and coffins were not disturbed.

The font is an inaccurately-worked four-sided bowl. The lower external edge is chamfered. The base and stem are modern.

Of ancient church plate, there is a chalice bearing the inscription :—

“ RHODD RICHARD PARRY, ESQ., I'W EGLWYS BLWYF
Y CWM, 1647.”

In the care of the Vicar is an old pewter pot with hinged lid and handle, holding—roughly speaking—two pints, formerly used at funerals as a loving-cup, to hold the spiced ale.

A fact in connection with the history of the Register Books shows how careful those who are privileged to be custodians of property of national or public interest should be of the treasures placed in their charge. A few years past, the Rev. T. Major Rees received a letter from a gentleman in London, of whom he had no knowledge, asking if he had missed one of the old Registers of Cwm Church. He had seen, he added, one book for sale in a second-hand bookshop in London. The Vicar looked through the old Registers, and found one volume missing. He reported the matter to the Archdeacon, now Bishop of Bangor, who warmly took the subject up, with the result that finally the missing volume was recovered.

Archdeacon Thomas, in his *History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, p. 287, mentions that three four-cornered bells are stated to have been discovered on the hill near the church, and to have been called respectively, "The yellow bell of Cwm," "The white bell of Abergele," and "The blue bell of Llanddulas."

Such is the history we may gather from an examination of the fabric and the treasures it contains. We have a series of links connecting us with the inhabitants of Cwm and the worshippers in its church during each century, from the fourteenth onward to our own time.