

HANTS FIELD CLUB AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Plate I.



NORMAN DOORWAY AT SHALFLEET, I.W.

(From a Drawing by J. F. Guyer.)

THE NORMAN DOORWAYS OF HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

BY J. F. GUYER.

In churches of the Norman style particular care was given to the doorways. One mediæval writer on symbolism sees in the door the symbol of Christ, who says of Himself "I am the door,"¹ and this idea had some share in determining the stateliness and richness which builders began to give to their doors at an early date. The church door is often one of the most important features of the building, for it gives those first impressions which go far to influence the judgment of the whole. Another writer, speaking of Norman architecture, alludes to the doorways as "the glory of the style"; at any rate they are frequently a prominent feature.

In Great Britain some hundreds of Norman doorways, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land, have been preserved. All are interesting, some especially so on account of the figure-sculpture in the *typanum*. Of these latter Gloucestershire possesses upwards of twenty-three, while in our own county of Hampshire only one remains, viz., at Shalfleet, in the Isle of Wight, to which reference is made later. The more ordinary doorways are numerous; we read in the newly-published "Memorials of old Hampshire" that "a large proportion of the churches have at least a Norman doorway or a chancel arch remaining."

This county compares favourably with others in possessing more than fifty examples, of which the most interesting are at Portchester, Romsey, Titchfield, Compton, Droxford, Nately Scures, Winchfield, St. Maurice and St. Bartholomew Hyde,

¹ Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*.

Winchester—the latter a very fine one—and in the Isle of Wight at Yaverland, Binstead, Northwood, and Bonchurch. Of this last Canon Venables, in his guide to the Isle of Wight, says: "The south door (date 1070) is a rude unadorned example of the *earliest* Norman." All have the semi-circular arch, and are dated from 1066 to 1180. Of this form of arch Ruskin writes: "Its type is always before us in that of the apparent vault of Heaven and horizon of the earth."

More interesting are those doorways which have figure-sculpture in the *tympanum*, the space between the lintel and the arch, filled in with a flat stone. This stone is often ornamented with a sculpture, generally representing a scriptural subject, sometimes with a diaper pattern.

The doorway at Shalfleet, Isle of Wight, circa 1150, already mentioned, is an illustration of the former, and is unique in the county. It is in a fairly good state of preservation, and is of three orders or sub-arches, recessed as usual, quite plain, but, on account of the sculpture in the *tympanum*, of particular interest. (See Plate I.) The sculpture represents a man in the middle with an animal on either side. The two animals have long foliated tails. Various interpretations have been assigned to this. Some think the sculpture represents David's encounter with the lion and the bear; others that the figure is of a bishop with arms extended, the hands resting on two heraldic griffins; others suppose it to be the figure of the Saviour (the nimbus, however, is absent); but Mr. Chas. Keyser, F.S.A.,¹ who is our greatest authority on Norman doorways, says in his recently-published work on "Sculptured Tympana," that, undoubtedly, it portrays Daniel in the den of lions.*

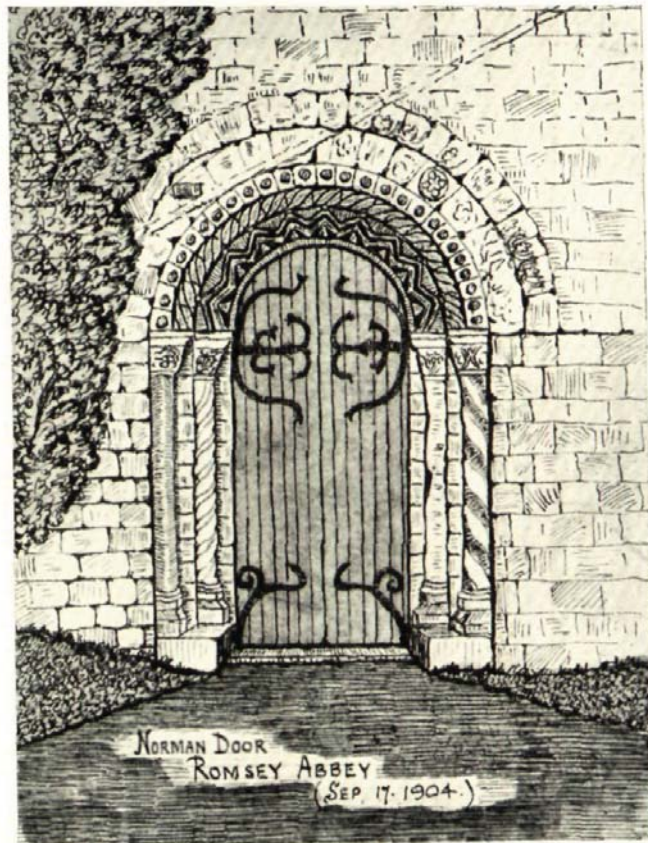
At first doorways were quite plain, as at Weeke, Weston Patrick, &c.; but ornamental mouldings gradually crept in, and here it may be noted that Norman ornamental mouldings are of great variety, but that certain forms recur with frequency. The most common was the *chevron* or *zigzag*. Hampshire is rich in this kind of ornamentation, the

¹ Mr. J. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Symbolism*, supports the view of Mr. Keyser.

* Excellent photographs of this door have just been obtained by Mr. Max Mills, Compton Studios, Southampton.

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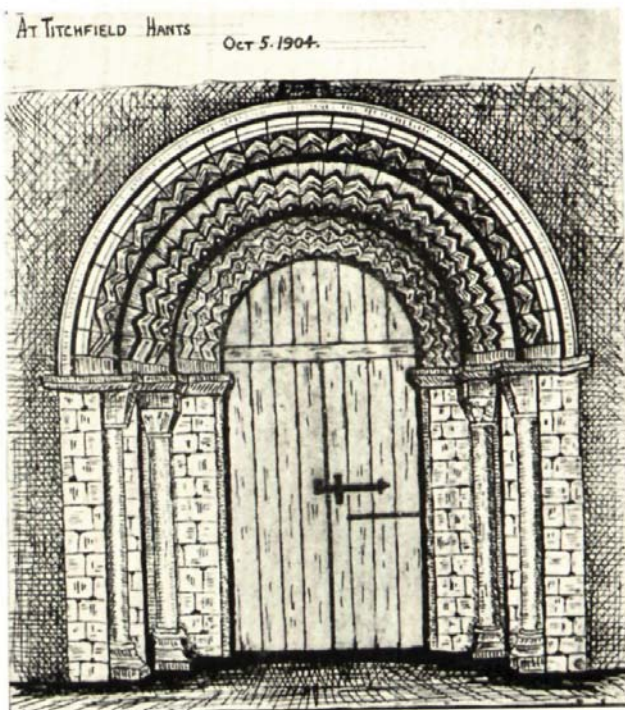
Plate III.



NORMAN DOORWAY IN ROMSEY ABBEY.

(From a Drawing by J. F. Guyer.)

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Plate II.



NORMAN DOORWAY AT TITCHFIELD.
(From a Drawing by J. F. Gayer.)

doorway at Titchfield being perhaps the finest example. (See Plate II.) It is of three "orders," all richly ornamented with *chevron*. Other examples are at Hurstbourne Priors, Fawley, Compton, Brockenhurst, Droxford, Easton, Greywell, and at Hamble (date 1109), where the uneven work of the moulding should be noticed. The contempt of the Norman workmen for exactitude is well known. Ruskin notes this characteristic in his "Seven Lamps of Architecture;" he says: "The vigour of a true school of early architecture is very curiously traceable, amongst other signs, in the contempt of exact symmetry and measurement." The builders seem to have worked the ornament to fit the particular block of stone they were using, the general idea of pattern only being kept in view. This is more noticeable in the *chevron* ornament, although it can be traced in other work. Very uneven *chevron* moulding can be seen at Northwood (the old Parish Church of Cowes), Isle of Wight. The *billet* was also (after 1100) a common Norman enrichment; this was a moulding cut into notches, so that the parts left resembled billets of wood. It is seen at Kingsclere and at Wooton, I.W. The *doubleconcave* moulding is to be found at Nately Scures, and the *cable* moulding at Romsey. The *beak head* is a characteristic Norman decoration, in which a head worked in an outer moulding winds a beak round a moulding next within. This is seen at Bishop's Sutton. A moulding of *diaper* pattern is at Sydmonton, and various others are at Porchester, Compton, and Fawley. The door at Romsey Abbey, known as the Nun's door (date circa 1160) has elaborate ornamentation, the *cable* moulding being prominent. (See Plate III.) It has, moreover, *zigzag*, a kind of rose pattern, and a particular kind of leaf moulding which is extremely rare, but, unfortunately, little of it is left. It is thought that this door may have been erected by foreign workmen, as its character is so different from the interior Norman work of the Abbey. For a time a carpenter's shop was built over this door, and the groove made in the wall—cutting through and disfiguring the mouldings—may be seen at the present day.

The west doorway of Portchester Church (St. Mary the Virgin-within-the-Castle) is a fine example of late Norman work. (See Plate IV.) It is highly ornamental, and is remarkable from the

fact that the mouldings are *interior* as well as exterior. Two of the shafts are spiral, with some slight ornamentation on the capitals. The mouldings are various—*star*, *zigzag*, and one of a medallion type; on two of the latter are zodiacal signs, Pisces on the left, and Sagittarius on the right. Sagittarius is also to be found on the left hand capital of a shaft at Wickham, and is on numerous doors throughout the country. The Sagittarius or mounted archer was the heraldic badge of Stephen, and has been supposed to be a proof that the church was erected in his reign; but there is no authority for this notion.

Yaverland, I.W., has a grotesque head above the keystone of the arch, and a diapered tympanum which has been cut away to increase the height of the door. Norman doorways were nearly always low, perhaps in order to impress worshippers with the idea of humility when entering the House of God.

The celebrated triple arch in the angle of the south choir aisle and transept at St. Cross, Winchester, must be mentioned; though not now used as a doorway, it no doubt formerly was an entrance to the transept. It has a beautiful *zigzag* and *cable* moulding, and one finely sculptured capital. St. Cross was built by Henry of Blois, 1129 to 1171, but this arch appears to have been added at a slightly later date.

Doorways have often been removed. One at Andover belonging to the old Church, and almost the only fragment left, now forms the entrance from the street to the churchyard. It is of three orders with *zigzag* moulding, having four shafts with well executed capitals. Another is at Binstead, near Ryde, I.W. This was formerly the North Door of the old Church, and over it is a figure of a man on a ram's head, which is locally known as "The Idol". (See Plate V.) The meaning of the figure has caused much speculation. Some suppose it to represent the Saxon god Thor. Wyndham, in his "Pictures of the Isle of Wight," 1794, speaks of this piece of Norman sculpture as a "large preposterous figure, sitting naked, which was in the early and rude ages considered as ornamental, and which absurd and barbarous taste actually continued in the country till the reign of Henry VIII." Another well known removal is at Winchester, the present entrance to St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church,

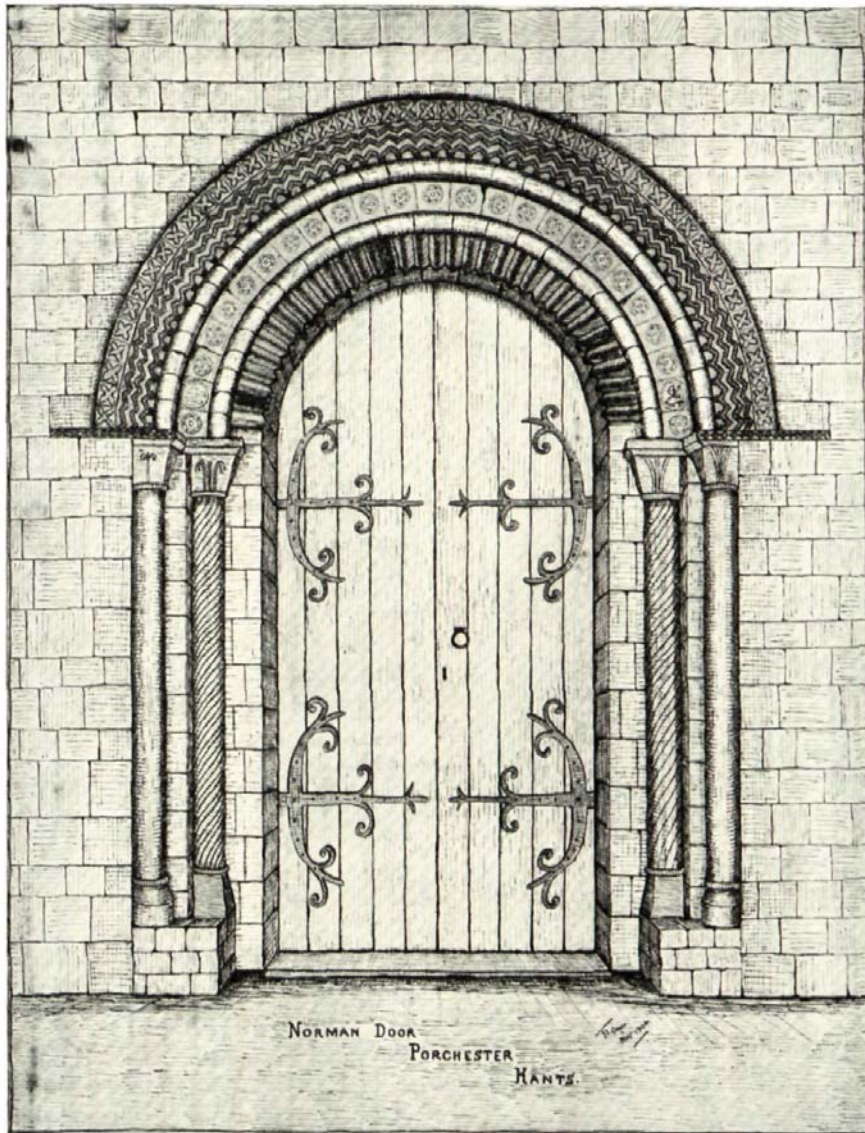
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Plate V.



NORMAN DOORWAY AT BINSTEAD, I.W.

(From a Drawing by J. F. Guyer.)



NORMAN DOORWAY AT PORCHESTER.

(From a Drawing by J. F. Guyer.)

being an early Norman doorway brought from St. Mary Magdalen's Hospital. The latter was situated on the Downs near Winchester, on the Alresford Road; its Chapel was demolished in 1788, and the west doorway taken to its present site. In many Norman Churches which have been rebuilt the doorways have been retained; this is the case in several Hampshire churches, viz., at Linkenholt, Wickham, Sydmonton, Hurstbourne Priors, Itchen Abbas, Newnham, Weston Patrick, Wooton St. Lawrence, and others. In some places fragments only of doorways exist; at Farley Chamberlayne there is just the hood moulding with two grotesque heads on either side; at Rowner, above the vestry door, the remnant of an arch; and at Upper Clatford the remains of a Norman doorway in the North aisle.

The doorway at Nately Scures (already alluded to)—a handsome one—is trefoil headed, with *lozenge*, *zigzag*, and other mouldings. It has the rather unusual design of a mermaid on one of the shafts. Also there are three grotesque heads, two

of them — apparently demons — being inverted.



CAPITAL AT NATELY SCURES.

There are some examples in Southampton of Norman doorways used in domestic buildings — e.g., at King John's Palace, at a building on the south side of St. Michael's Church, and also at the entrance to the barrel vault in the old walls by the Western Shore.

In the study of any particular part of church architecture, or furniture, doorways have a distinct advantage

from the fact that it is not necessary to go inside

the building, to see them. More village churches are kept open now than formerly, nevertheless many are still under lock and key, and it is not always convenient to hunt up the sexton, or call at the vicarage in order to procure an entrance.

A photographic collection of the Norman doorways of Hampshire would make an interesting study. It is Ruskin who says: "The greatest service which can at present be rendered to architecture is the careful delineation of its details from the beginning of the twelfth to the close of the thirteenth century by means of photography. I would particularly desire to direct the attention of amateur photographers to this task by earnestly requesting them to bear in mind that while a photograph of a landscape is merely an amusing toy, one of early architecture is a precious historical document." Again, Bacon in alluding to antiquities, calls them "remnants of history which have casually escaped the shipwreck of time." They are "amongst the best riches of the freight of knowledge—not merely curiosities, but of intrinsic value."

NOTE.—The following is a fairly complete list of places in Hampshire where Norman doorways are to be found:—Andover, Bishop's Sutton, Brockenhurst, Breamore, Binsted (near Alton), Bradley, Bramley, Bullington, Catherington, Clauford (Upper), Compton, Droxford, Easton, Farley Chamberlayne, Fawley, Greywell, Hamble, Hinton Ampner, Houghton, Hurstbourne Priors, Itchen Abbas, King's Worthy, Kingsclere, Linkenholt, East Meon, Martyr Worthy, Milford, Monk Sherborne, Nately Scures, Newnham, Portchester, Romsey, Rowner, Southampton, Little Somborne, Stoke Charity, Stoneham (North), Titchfield, Up Nately, Warnborough (South), Weeke, Warnford, Wonston, Wickham, Winchester, Winchfield, Wootton St. Lawrence, Yatley.

In the Islé of Wight:—Binstead, Bonchurch, Calbourne, Carisbrooke, Freshwater, Northwood, Shalfleet, Wootton, Yaverland.

