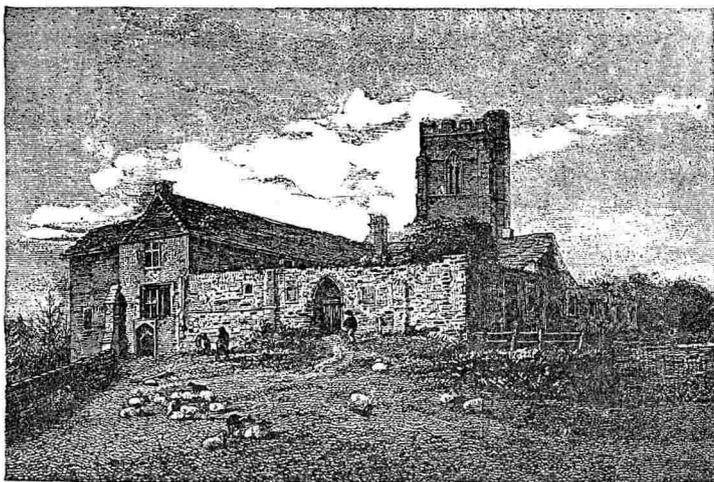


S. GREGORY'S CHURCH AND COLLEGE,  
SUDBURY.

BY W. W. HODSON.

The Church of S. Gregory, Sudbury, is in many respects the most interesting of the three noble Perpendicular churches, which adorn the town. For several hundred years there was a close connection between Church and College, Abp. Theobald ("Simon of Sudbury") having founded and richly endowed the College, and rebuilt the spacious chancel of the Church for the "poor priests," whom he had placed on his collegiate foundation.



S. GREGORY'S CHURCH AND COLLEGE, SUDBURY.

This Chancel is of unusual size, and as long as the nave, being 62 ft. long by 21 ft. wide. The 20 oaken *Miserere* stalls with elbow-carvings of conventional heads, still retain their original position. The church is specially famous for

its font-cover, of rich, painted tracery and tabernacle work, over 12 ft. high, with "telescope" arrangement. The present building was erected at different periods, ranging from about A.D. 1350 to 1530.

A few years since, when restoring the middle window of the north aisle, the workmen found in the walling several interesting architectural relics, plainly pointing to an earlier church, occupying the same site as the present. Probably other fragments would have been met with, had more of the old work been uncovered. A floriated capital of Transitional, Norman or Early English work, with stiff-leaved" trefoil foliage, and two drip-stones, representing the head of a Knight and his lady, all in excellent preservation, were found embedded in the wall, between the outside "dressed" flint casing and the inside plaster.

Here, after the lapse of some seven centuries, we see as distinctly, and apparently as freshly cut, as if the work were done yesterday, the manipulation of a real art-workman. The sweeps of his compasses and their centres, and the few geometric lines he employed denote his skill. He makes a few pencil marks upon the bell of the cap, and gives a few touches with his chisel and maul, and we have a beautiful little piece of ornamental foliage. If it could be seen in its original position, with a shaft below and an abacus and moulded arch above, it would compare favourably with any similar work of the period. The drip-stone heads are effectively carved, and at the first glance the Knight looks like a Crusader. The features are too delicately cut for a conventional head, and it may be an individual or typical portrait of one of the Lords of Clare, from whom the town received many of its privileges, who were munificent founders and patrons of churches, priories and hospitals, and whose golden shield, with the three red chevrons, is so well known to the watchful antiquary in Mercia and East Anglia. He finds it engraved with cunning hand in oak and stone; shining in jewelled windows still faintly glowing with silver and blue and red hues, which no modern craftsman can hope to imitate;

painted on ruddy tiles worn by the feet of men who lived while the Plantagenets ruled in England.

The material is clunch stone from Cambridgeshire, so commonly used in our churches. It was very suitable for inside work, but did not answer for outside, exposed to atmospheric influences, and when built in exterior wall, parapet or buttress, though it might pass muster at the time, yet generations afterwards its whiteness and softness would tell the tale of a careless, or unscrupulous builder.

Evidence of one or more previous churches are seen in the small, unadorned, piscina with triangular head, low down in the eastern wall, on the left of the altar; in the bevelled Purbeck gravestone, on which stand the lintels of the belfry door; and in the worked stones on the outside of S. Anne's Chapel, adjoining the large south Porch, and forming one projection with it, both being spanned by one roof.

A more particular and historical account of the church appears in Vol. vi., pt. 3, pp. xxv. to xxvi. of "The Proceedings," and also at p. xlvi. and of "The College," in Vol. vii., pt. 1, pp. 25—32.