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## **The Architecture of Hayles Abbey**

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## THE ARCHITECTURE OF HAYLES ABBEY.

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THE Abbey of Hayles was founded in 1246 by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, for monks of the Cistercian Order, and was colonised from the royal foundation of Beaulieu, in the New Forest, by twenty monks and ten *conversi*. In 1251 the work of building had so far progressed as to enable thirteen altars to be dedicated. In 1270 Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, presented the famous relic of the Holy Blood. New work was immediately commenced, and was completed, together with the shrine to contain the relic, in 1277.

Before the excavations were undertaken last year upon the site of the abbey church at Hayles, very little was known respecting it.

All that remains above ground is part of the south aisle wall of the nave next the cloister. Now, from entire ignorance respecting the nature of the church, complete knowledge of the whole ground plan has been the reward of those engaged in the excavations.

More of the walls above the footings might have been left; but it is fortunate that the comparatively small amount that does remain enables the whole plan to be reconstructed without drawing anywhere upon the imagination.

The church that was commenced at the foundation of the abbey in 1246 was, as usual, cruciform in plan, and consisted of presbytery with aisles and a procession aisle with five chapels eastward, transepts with three eastern chapels to each, and a nave with aisles. All the main arcades were built upon sleeper walls, as at the mother abbey of Beaulieu.

It would be natural to suppose that a daughter house would follow the plan of the parent; but Hayles, so far at any rate as the church is concerned, is an excellent example to show that this was not the general custom; which is also borne out by the fact that Netley, the other daughter of Beaulieu, was neither like the parent nor its sister of Hayles. All three foundations are very late in the list of Cistercian houses in this country, and the universal similarity of the early plan had long before become anything but general owing to various causes.

At Hayles the presbytery was four bays in length, with the westernmost bay considerably narrower than the rest.

On the south side, the plinths remain of two of the main arcade piers. The eastern one retains the draft lines of the bases, and the western the draft lines of the pier itself. The piers consisted of clusters of four large columns towards the cardinal points, with smaller ones between. Each had a wide fillet in the centre. The arches were of three orders, with a label (*Fig. 1, Plate II.*). The main span was vaulted, with transverse and diagonal ribs, with large carved bosses at the intersection of the latter. There were no ridge ribs.

Between the piers and separating the aisles from the presbytery were solid walls three feet in thickness. Unlike the thirteenth century work at Fountains, Tintern, and other Cistercian abbeys, these walls were not provided for from the first, but subsequently built in between the piers.

On the north side the wall was subsequently narrowed over twelve inches,<sup>1</sup> but for what reason it is impossible to say.

The east gable, judging from the two projections in the footings, was pierced by three arches, probably in line with the arcades on either side.

The side aisles were mere passages to the eastern altars, and were vaulted with cross and diagonal ribs without bosses. Against the outer walls were stone seats upon which

<sup>1</sup> This at any rate was the case in the second bay, as is shown by an added double row of tiles of different date from the original paving, and presumably the others were similarly altered.

the vaulting shafts rested. At the east end of the north aisle the first course remains of the projecting pier to carry the cross arch in line with the east gable. The outer walls are of the unusual thickness of five feet, and the buttresses project another six feet, so that doubtless the main vault of the presbytery was supported over the aisles by flying buttresses. In line with the main east gable were large turrets; and the southern one, if not both, contained a vice or spiral staircase.

That there was an eastern termination containing chapels beyond the main gable is proved: 1, by the evidence of dedications of thirteen altars, which could not be accounted for without there being five in this position; 2, by the projecting base already noticed in the north aisle; and, 3, by the footings of both aisle walls continuing across the later chapels to some 24 feet beyond the main east wall.

If this termination was merely a single aisle, as at Byland and Waverley, it would be entirely occupied by the chapels, and necessitate the procession path being within the main east gable, as it was in those two cases. But the high altar at Hayles occupied this position, so the procession path as well as the chapels would be eastward of the main east gable, as is the case at Dore, the eastern extension of which was being built at the same time.

Of the crossing nothing remains beyond the footings of the great piers; but there are indications that the tower caused trouble early in its history, as will be shown later.

The transepts were both four bays in length, vaulted as the presbytery. The main east walls were carried on arcades with piers of the same plan as those of the presbytery, except that, judging from the lowest course of the one left in the south transept, they were without bases or plinths except to the column on the west face, which had both. (*Fig. 2, Plate II.*) The chapels were divided from one another by walls 10 inches thick.

The south-east corner of the south transept has been completely destroyed, together with its foundations.

The west wall is 8 feet thick, and contained the night stairs to the dorter, which had a square vaulted lobby at the foot. The angle shaft, with base and cap to carry the vault, remains in the north-west corner of the lobby. This treatment of the night stairs is the same as that at Beaulieu, but so far as is at present known there are no other examples in this country.<sup>1</sup>

The north transept would have, as usual, a doorway in the north gable, which apparently was subsequently used as the entrance for pilgrims to the shrine. Externally between the northernmost buttresses on the west side are the paving and remains of the walls of a small room, 13 feet by 9, which was perhaps the checker of the sacrist or his assistant, whose duty it was to conduct the visitors to and from the shrine.

Eastward of the chapels was another added chamber, but this has not yet been sufficiently excavated to show its character or how it was entered.

The nave was eight bays in length, with north and south aisles, but so far as at present excavated nothing beyond the south aisle wall remains above the footings. The easternmost bay was considerably wider than the others, but the arch into the aisles was of the same width as the rest.

The usual division walls between the nave and aisles of a Cistercian church certainly did not exist in this first bay, unless they were built, like those in the presbytery, independently of the main structure. For adjoining the place where the south-east respond should be is a semi-circular base that supported a curious three-quarter column with a couple of smaller shafts at the sides, shaped at the back to fit the mouldings of the older respond.<sup>2</sup> A number of long stones of this shape were found in this bay, but not else-

<sup>1</sup> At the Austin canonesses' houses of Lacock and Burnham the stairs are similarly formed in a thickening of the dorter wall, but served the double purpose of day and night stairs, and are entered from the cloister and not from the church.

<sup>2</sup> The object of these was first pointed out by my friend, Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, to the Rev. Canon Bazeley, before I visited the excavations.

where, showing that the easternmost pair of arches only were strengthened in this manner.

The arch was treated in the same way, but was further strengthened by the insertion of new bonding stones. This work must be little later than the main building, as the arch mould is exactly copied. A similar example of strengthening, but of later date, occurs in the same position at Christchurch, Canterbury, there inserted on account of some settlement of the tower.

The nave aisles apparently were precisely similar to those of the presbytery. The south aisle wall remains to a considerable height. At the east end are the bases of the respond for the cross arch. (*Fig. 3, Plate II.*) The east bay contains the procession doorway to the cloister. Internally this is mostly destroyed, but it had nook shafts in the jambs and a draw-bar hole in the east jamb. The first vaulting shaft has been inserted, but is merely an alteration in design, as the base mouldings are precisely similar to all the others, except the third and seventh, which have different mouldings, but are apparently of the same date.

The second vaulting shaft was destroyed by the erection of a stone screen across the aisle. From this westward was a stone seat, which in the third bay has been cut down to the floor level, and again at the sixth bay.

In the westernmost bay is an inserted doorway from the cloister, of the fifteenth century, and immediately to the west is the moulded jamb of a doorway leading to a skew passage to the *cellarium* and the dorter of the lay brothers above.

At the west end of the aisle is a plain doorway of one chamfered member.

The west portion of the nave has yet to be excavated.

To revert to the east end and the alterations that were effected there for the accommodation of the shrine. As before stated, the original termination beyond the main east gable consisted of a procession aisle with five chapels eastward. Before any of the new work was commenced it is reasonable to suppose that the basement of the shrine was erected

within the pre-existing chapel and part of the eastern aisle. This basement still exists to about 3 feet in height, built of rough hewn stone, and was evidently covered up from first to last with wainscot and tabernacle work. It is placed over 12 inches out of centre towards the north, which would hardly have happened if it had been erected after the new work was finished and the older had been removed.

From the plan it will be seen that the whole of the new work could easily have been constructed round and over the centre division of the original eastern termination without interfering with the procession path to the shrine round the east end.

The *novum opus*, which took six years to build, consisted, on plan, of a five-sided apse, terminating the main walls, the aisles being continued around it as a procession path, with five semi-octagonal chapels radiating therefrom; the whole bearing a marked resemblance to the work round the feretory of Edward the Confessor at Westminster built some twenty-five years before.

In addition to the footings, which remain complete, of the whole of this work, there exists a considerable amount of the first few courses of the walls of the two southern chapels, from which the whole plan can be reconstructed.

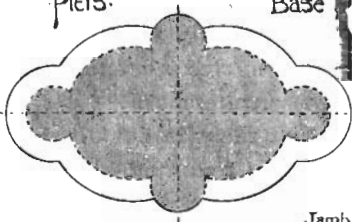
Each chapel contained an altar against the wall opposite the opening from the aisle, raised upon a single step,<sup>1</sup> and was vaulted with ribs springing from triple wall shafts in each angle, which met in the centre without a boss. Externally each angle had a large buttress. The footings of those to the centre chapel differ from the others in being wedge-shaped. Whether this indicates that the buttresses above followed these lines is impossible to say, as nothing remains above the footings.

The main apse was carried on clustered piers of a curious shape, which will be better understood from the detailed

<sup>1</sup> I beg to thank Mr. W. H. St. John Hope for pointing out the evidence of this step, which is clearly shown by a mortar line against the remaining portions of the walls

# :NAVES:

Apse  
Piers.



Base

Vault ribs of Chapels



Vault piers of Chapels

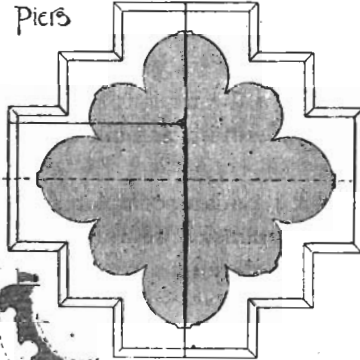
Vault ribs of Shrine

Jamb Trigonzeuf



Presbytery

Piers

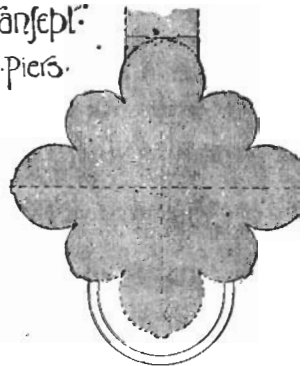


Main vault ribs

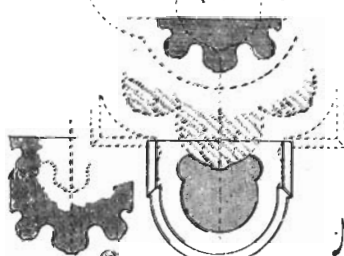
Aisle Vault ribs

Transept

Piers

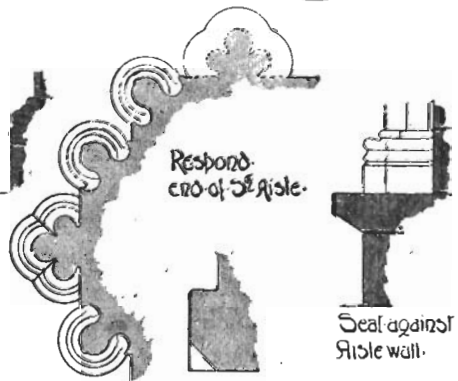


Arch



NAVE

Respond end of Aisle



Seal against Aisle wall

Arch & Pier  
Strengthen first Bay

W. door of Aisle

Scale of 0 1 2 3 4 feet



plan (*Fig. 4, Plate II.*) than by description. The lowest course and part of the base of one of these piers remains towards the south-east.

The old east wall, with its three arches, was afterwards removed, as proved by the existence of stones similar to the inner member of the main arcade being used up in the pedestal of the lavatory in the south aisle, of which more hereafter.

To the west of the southernmost chapel is a small doorway opening outwards into what was apparently the passage to the infirmary.

With respect to the internal arrangements, the excavations have been very successful; for whereas at Beaulieu and Waverley<sup>1</sup> not a sign has yet been found of any cross screens or quire stalls, here they have all revealed themselves with unusual clearness.

The high altar, as before stated, was immediately beneath the main east gable, but nothing remains of it except a rude mass of rubble foundations, which formed part of the platform. In the second bay on the south side the wall between the piers is thicker than in the others in order to accommodate the *sedilia* and *piscina*. In the westernmost bay on the north side is an interment once covered by a richly decorated monument.

The north aisle retains a considerable amount of its original tile paving: it had a wide band of tiles down the centre, evidently to guide the procession.

The south aisle had in its westernmost bay on the north side a lavatory with a small drain leading therefrom for a short distance. An exactly similar arrangement existed at Beaulieu, and its use was probably to receive any holy water that remained over after the Sunday procession. At Fountains it exists in the form of a *piscina* in the seat beneath the wall arcade, and at Furness just within the

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written a portion of the footings of the *pulpitum* has been found, and it is hoped that by further research other evidences of the arrangements may be traced.

vestry. In all cases it seems an afterthought, and at Hayles the pedestal is formed of stones similar to the inner member of the main arcades.

The transepts show little of any arrangements except that the chapels were raised a step above the main floor, and were enclosed by screens, probably of stone, between the arches.

The quire occupied part of the crossing and the first bay of the nave. The quire screen was of stone, and placed slightly westward of the first pair of nave piers. Allowing the normal space for each seat, there appear to have been fifteen stalls to the north and south and three on either side the quire door facing east, making thirty-six in all. In front of the north and south ranges of stalls is a sunk trench  $2\frac{1}{4}$  feet wide, which was apparently the space beneath another range of seats for the novices.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the door through the screen at the west end of the quire, which was known as the lower entrance, there were other entrances on either side eastward of the stalls and immediately westward of the east crossing piers, known as the upper entrances. Between the eastern piers of the crossing were the *gradus presbyterii*.

Six feet westward of the quire screen in the nave was another transverse screen, and these two screens supported the *pulpitum*. The usual flanking altars on either side the quire door do not seem to have existed at Hayles, or if they did at first they were subsequently removed upon the erection of the nave altar.

Between the third pair of piers was another cross screen, upon which would stand the great rood, with the nave altar in front, flanked by two doorways through the screen.

Between this rood-screen and the *pulpitum* was the retro-quire, where the occupants of the infirmary attended to hear divine service.

The four westernmost bays of the nave were originally

<sup>1</sup> This was paved with large lozenge-shaped tiles some 12 inches beneath the floor level.

occupied by the quire of the lay brothers, as Mr. St. John Hope so clearly proves in his *Monograph on Fountains*. It seems clear that at Hayles, as in other Cistercian houses in this country, the lay brothers' quire was subsequently disused and removed together with the solid walls under the main arcades at the back of the stalls.

In the north aisle opposite the second pier was a cross screen that apparently had an altar to the west, and in the south aisle was a corresponding screen, but without any remains of an altar. At the next pier on this side was another cross screen with an altar, and in the third and fourth bays between the main piers are two interments formerly surmounted by very ornate canopied monuments.