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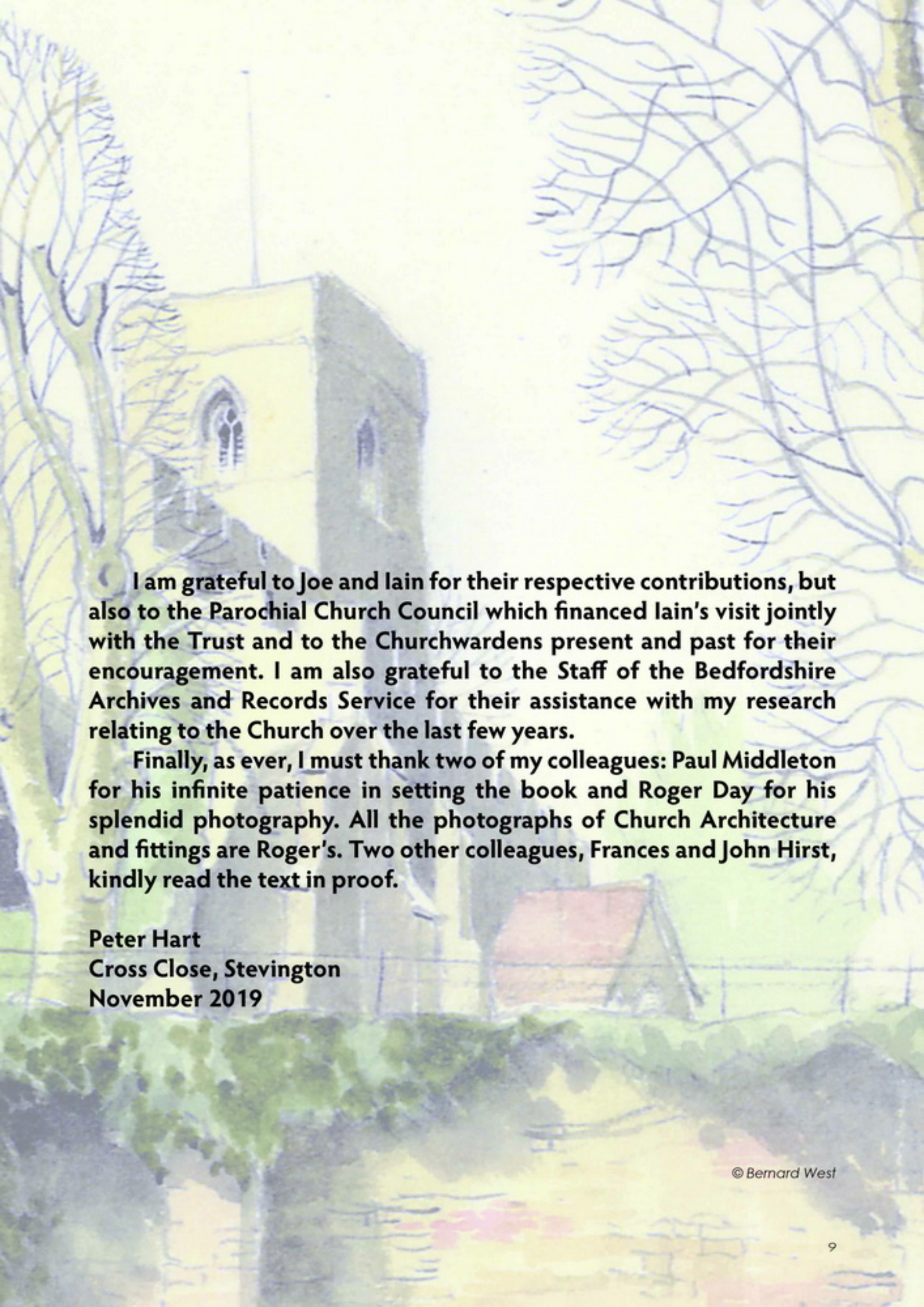
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## Preface

About three years ago the Parochial Church Council decided to produce for the use of visitors a new Guide to St Mary's and the Churchwardens asked the Trust to become involved. While it was clear that the existing Guide needed revision and updating (that has now been published separately), I formed the view, and the PCC agreed, that the architecture of the Church and its history warranted a more detailed and fully illustrated work.

However, while I felt able to make a reasonable fist of the history, I had no systematic knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture. Joe Prentice, a Stevington man and archaeological historian and I made a preliminary inspection of the Church and Joe suggested that I commission his colleague, Iain Soden of Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd, to accompany us with Robert Hart (then Churchwarden) on what we called a "tutored perambulation" of the Church. This took place on 20 February 2017 and amounted to a three-hour inspection of the Church, inside and out. The insights Iain provided were unexpected in some cases and generally very instructive. The Second Part of this book is indebted to his observations but, of course, any errors in the text are mine.

A watercolor illustration of a church tower with a Gothic-style window, partially obscured by bare trees. The scene is set in a rural landscape with a fence, a small red-roofed building, and a body of water in the foreground. The style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a muted color palette.

**I am grateful to Joe and Iain for their respective contributions, but also to the Parochial Church Council which financed Iain's visit jointly with the Trust and to the Churchwardens present and past for their encouragement. I am also grateful to the Staff of the Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service for their assistance with my research relating to the Church over the last few years.**

**Finally, as ever, I must thank two of my colleagues: Paul Middleton for his infinite patience in setting the book and Roger Day for his splendid photography. All the photographs of Church Architecture and fittings are Roger's. Two other colleagues, Frances and John Hirst, kindly read the text in proof.**

**Peter Hart  
Cross Close, Stevington  
November 2019**



Plate 65 How the Rood Screen might have appeared before the Dissolution

the latter was widened later. Each of the nave arcades has three bays. The VCH considers that work on the North Arcade (*Plate 74*) was commenced before the South as the detail there is better than the South Arcade (*Plate 66*). However, Pevsner says the South Arcade is c1300 and the North Aisle later. The fabric of the North Aisle is certainly richer than the South.

The red and black glazed tiles laid throughout the Nave are Victorian (*see Plate 48*).

## The Aisles

As we have said, the new aisles were carried to the north and south faces of the Tower which otherwise was left untouched i.e. the stonework of the aisles was not keyed in to the fabric of the Tower (*see above at Plate 15*). The new aisles may have started life as chantry chapels and become parochial later. Repairs were carried out to the roof of both aisles in about 1630 and to the windows of both aisles in 1657-8<sup>177</sup>.

## The South Aisle and Arcade

In the wall of the South Aisle are two restored trefoil windows in the segmented perpendicular style matching those in the North Aisle. The lean-to roof is modern. The restored west window replicates that of

the North Aisle. The South Aisle roof was repaired in about 1630 and new joists and wall plates inserted<sup>178</sup>.

Pevsner describes the South Arcade thus: *the S arcade is of c 1300, with high quatrefoil piers with deep continuous hollows in the diagonals and sunk quadrant arch mouldings*<sup>179</sup>.

The VCH suggests that the South Doorway opens into a porch contemporary with the Rood Stair. However, Pevsner states that the South Doorway is contemporary with the South Arcade. It is of rich design with capitals. Shafts and bases are somewhat renewed. To the west of the porch within the Vestry is a restored window with net tracery matching that of the North Aisle and at the west end is a smaller modern window of two lights again with net tracery.

Five new pews were installed in the South Aisle in 1818 at the expense of the Parish<sup>180</sup>.

## The North Aisle and Arcade

Pevsner considers that the North Aisle and Arcade were constructed after the South. The VCH and West differ. Pevsner describes it as later decorated: *filleted quatrefoil piers with thin shafts in the diagonals. Arches again with sunken quadrants. The same motifs are used in the tower arch and chancel arch*<sup>181</sup>. (*See Plates 81 and 61*).



*Plate 66* The South Arcade and Aisle



Plate 67 North Aisle viewed through the South Arcade

He also believes the aisle was widened later. West writes:

*... the (northern) is by far the richer and is somewhat earlier; it is designed in the same way as the Chancel arch with rolls between the shafts. The roll moulds of the arches terminate in heads with contemporary headdress<sup>182</sup>.*

The capitals of the Arcade carry interesting dripstone heads. As they appear to have no biblical or other sacred significance they could well be portraits of the masons themselves.

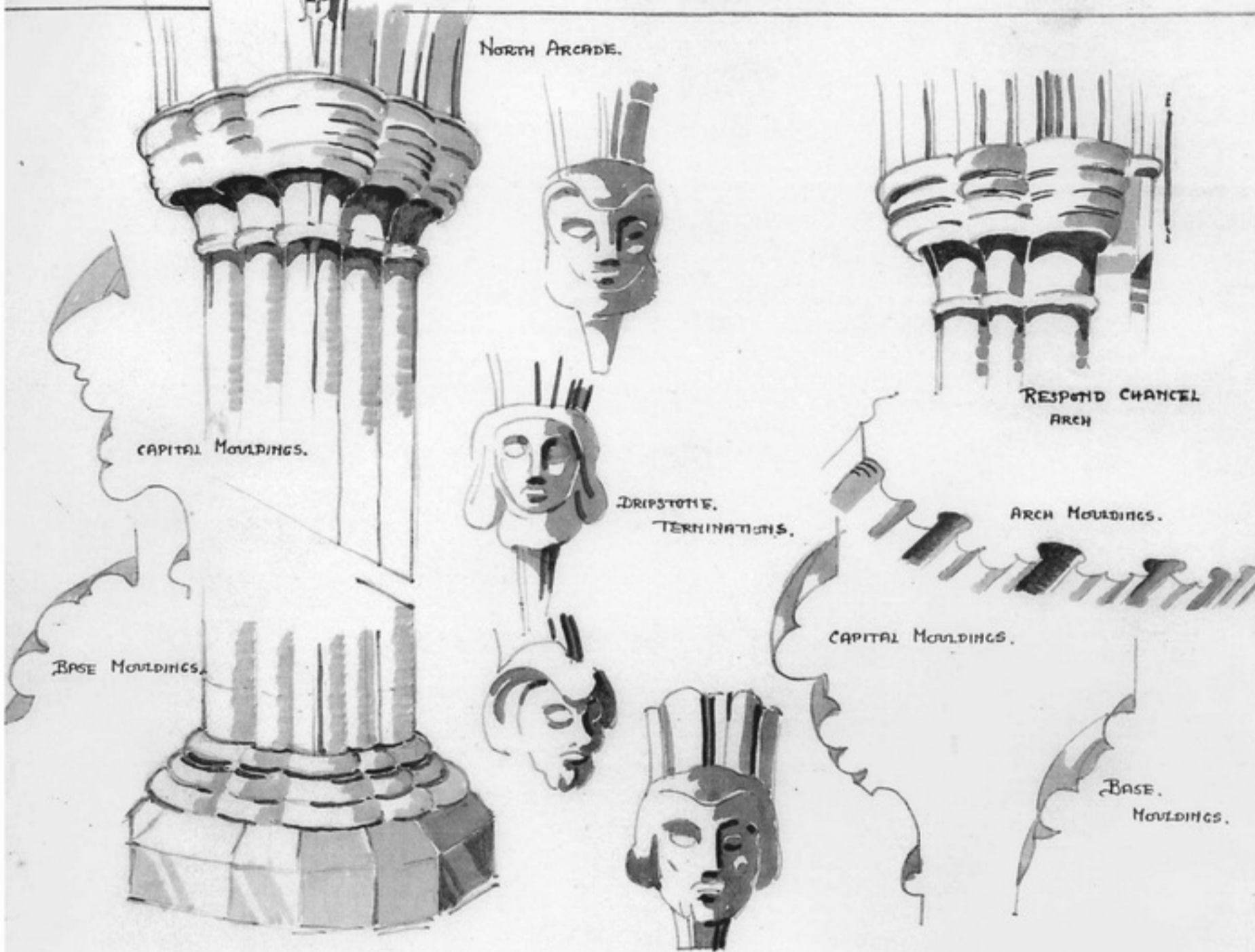
At the east end of the aisle two windows each with three lights and tracery under a segmental head date from the 1872 restoration in the perpendicular style (see above at Plates 21 and 67). Under the window to the right is a small

14<sup>th</sup> century opening with a pointed trefoiled head (see above at Plates 21 and 22), possibly a leper's window. The west window of two lights with reticulated tracery is 14<sup>th</sup> Century and is of the same pattern as the window in the north wall. The North Aisle Roof was repaired in about 1630. It was further repaired in



Plate 68 South Arcade Capital Mouldings

STEVINGTON CHURCH.



STEVINGTON CHURCH.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS.  
14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.

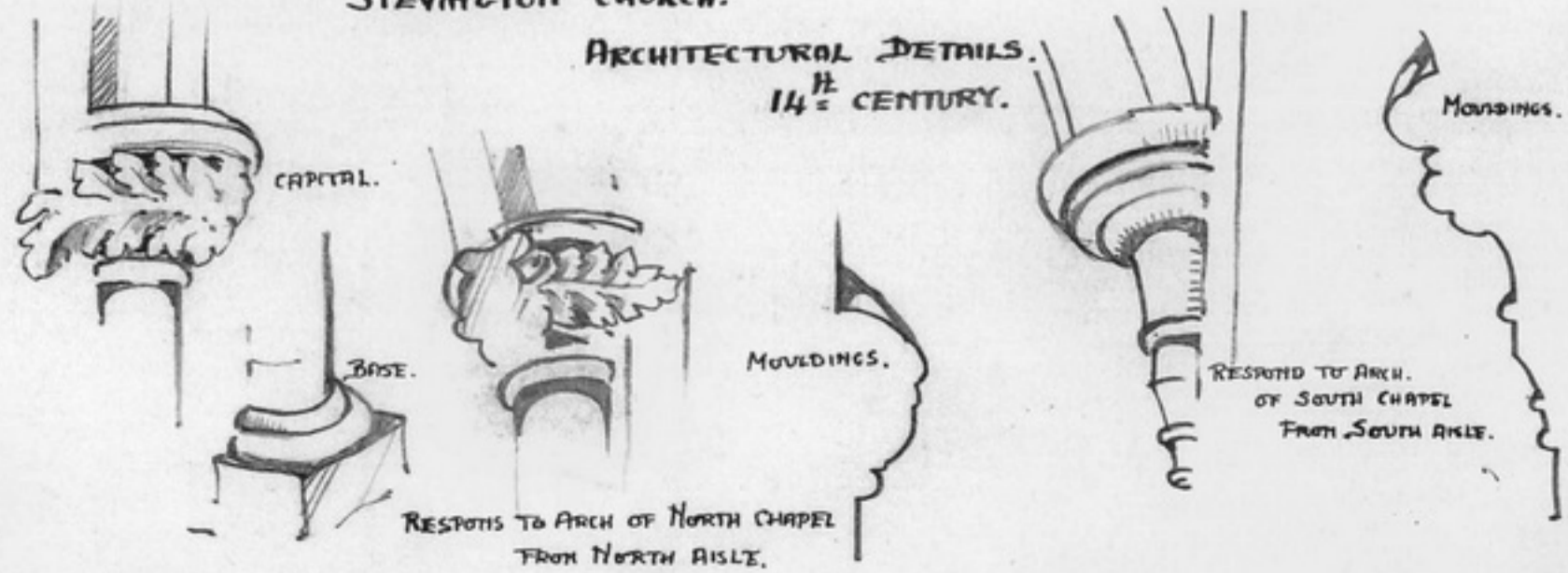


Plate 69 Capital Mouldings and Dripstones (Bernard West)