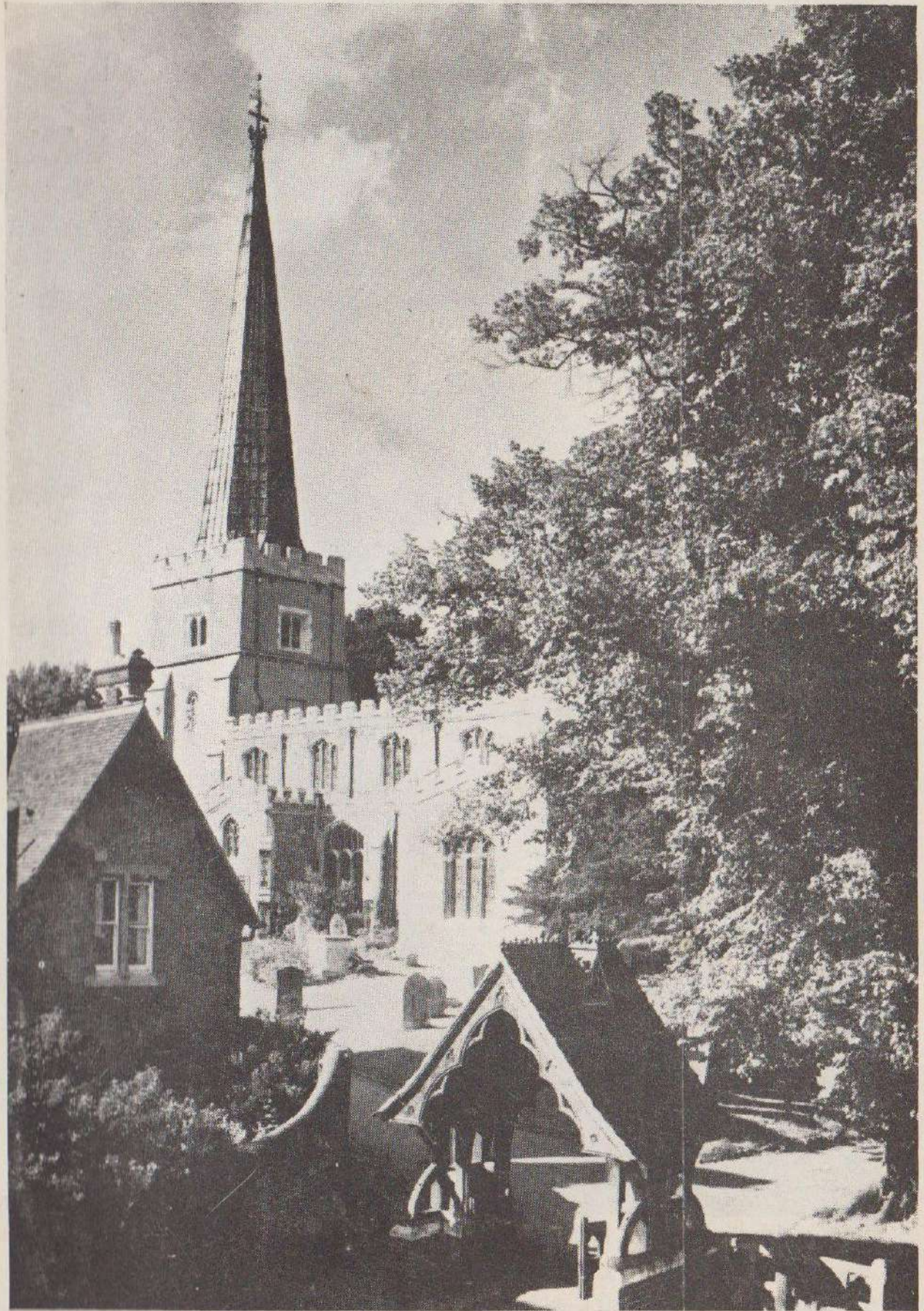


St. Mary Harrow on the Hill



Illustrated Guide

20p

20/5/1978



General view of the interior, showing the Early English nave with its four bays and the chancel arch. The East End, except for the South Wall, was rebuilt in the mid-nineteenth century.

History

THE commanding site of Harrow Hill has for more than a thousand years been a centre of religious life and worship. In 825, at a council of Clovesho, Cwoethryth, Abbess of Southminster and daughter of Cenulf, late King of the Mercians, granted lands at Harrow to Wulfred, Archbishop of Canterbury. These lands remained in the possession of the Church for over 700 years until Archbishop Cranmer surrendered them to Henry VIII in 1545. The Domesday Book of 1086 shows that Harrow was an important place with a considerable population and mentions a priest holding a hide of land (100-120 acres). Almost certainly, therefore, there was a church preceding the present one, but no trace now remains.

Archbishop Lanfranc began to build a Norman church in 1087, and his successor, St. Anselm, consecrated it in 1094, but the lower two storeys of the tower are all that is left. The West door of the tower, though Norman, belongs to a period some fifty years later.

By the end of the twelfth century, a new chancel with the existing chancel arch and the lancet windows in the south wall had been built, and in the early 13th century the Norman nave was replaced by the present nave in the Early English style of architecture. Elias de Dereham (c. 1205-1245) who was responsible for the building of Salisbury Cathedral, was Rector of Harrow at the time.

In 1163 Thomas à Becket held his court at Harrow, and in 1170 he came for the last time to meet his most faithful friend and counsellor, Abbot Simon of St. Albans. Thomas returned from Harrow to Canterbury to meet his martyrdom twelve days later.



The 15th century clerestory with its 500 year old roof of richly carved oak, taken from the trees around Harrow. The windows portray the history of Church and School.


In 1324, William de Bosco, Rector, founded a Chantry of the Blessed Mary, but this was swept away at the time of the Reformation. The altar probably occupied the south transept of the church.

From 1437-1467, John Byrkhede, friend of Archbishop Chicheley, was Rector. Like Elias de Dereham, he was a master-builder, and during his time a further transformation of the church took place. The roof of the Early English nave was removed (the marks of its beams are still to be seen in the plaster above the arches) and the clerestory built with windows in the Perpendicular style. The windows of the aisles were renewed in the same style, and a fine timber roof, richly carved, replaced the earlier one. An upper storey was added to the tower and the spire built. The south porch with a parvise (a priest's room or chapel) above was also erected at this time.

In 1544 Cranmer surrendered to Henry VIII the Manor of Harrow Rectory and a year later the greater manor of Harrow itself. The former was granted to Christ Church Oxford, the latter to Sir Edward North to whom in 1547 was conveyed the advowson of the Vicarage and the glebe. The college however retained the great tithes.

By the 19th century the church had fallen into bad repair, and in the years 1846-49 it was greatly restored by Gilbert Scott. The chancel, except the south wall, was reconstructed, the battlemented parapets were added and the exterior of the church with the exception of the tower was re-faced with flint. A north porch of stone was built to replace the older one of wood and the north chancel chapel and vestry were added.

Thus the church as we see it today, is the product of Norman, Early English, 15th and 16th century builders, and has a continuous history stretching back for nearly 900 years.





The South-west corner of the Church where the plaster has been removed revealing the undressed stone of the original wall.

Acknowledgements to Stuarts Restoration Service.

Photo by Sydney W. Newbury.

Points of Interest

Exterior and Churchyard

IN the churchyard near the terrace with its extensive view, is the tomb of John Peachey — the Peachey Stone, now protected with iron casing. It was here that Lord Byron used to sit for hours when a boy at Harrow School. In a letter written from Italy in 1822 he speaks of it as "my favourite spot." Engraved on a marble tablet, placed nearby, is one of the verses, "Lines written beneath an elm in the churchyard of Harrow", Sept. 2, 1807. To the east of the Church is a row of fine lime trees. They were planted by Isaac Greentree, churchwarden, who died in 1702.

" Beneath these green trees, rising to the skies,
The planter of them, Isaac Greentree lies;
The day shall come when these green trees shall fall,
And Isaac Greentree rise above them all."

When viewing the exterior, notice the Lanfranc windows in the lower part of the tower, and the west doorway with its chevron ornamentations and mutilated capitals. Also the parvise above the 15th century south porch.

The upright slate stone by the path between the south door and the tower, commemorating Thomas Port. The inscription tells the tale of his fatal railway accident in 1838.

Interior

FIRST visit the tower and notice the two deeply recessed Norman windows. The modern glass represents on the north, Lanfranc the builder of the tower, and on the south, John Lyon the founder of Harrow School.

From the tower arch looking east can be got a good idea of the Early English church — the four bays of the nave arcade and the chancel arch which separates the modern chancel from the rest of the church. These bays spring from half-columns (or responds) at the four corners of the nave and three intermediate columns. It will be noticed that the two half-columns by the tower arch are somewhat inclined from the upright and yet the capitals are horizontally true in keeping with rest of the arcade. It seems that soon after the commencement of the building of the new nave, there occurred a settlement and not until this had ceased was the building of the arcade proceeded with. That this building took place in the early part of the 13th century is evidenced by the characteristic deeply incised moulding of the capitals and bases of the columns. The aisle-arch into the south transept is earlier in date and is contemporary with the chancel arch and the south wall of the chancel. The aisle-arch into the north transept is of later date for it rests on corbels representing heads with mediaeval head-dress.



The south transept, dedicated to St. Anselm, and refurnished to commemorate the 875th anniversary of the consecration of the Church.

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Above the Early English arcade will be seen the 15th century clerestory with its perpendicular windows and the fine richly-carved timber roof. Notice the grotesque stone corbels which support the shafts representing the twelve apostles. The stained glass in the clerestory windows is an illustrated history of the church and school, and was presented in 1902. The subjects are:

1. The Council of Clovesho, 825.
2. The laying of the foundation stone by Lanfranc, 1087
3. The Consecration by St. Anselm, 1094.
4. The visit of Abbot Simon to Thomas à Becket, 1170.
5. The remission of tolls by Archbishop Chicheley, 1441.
6. The building of the clerestory, 1441.
7. The granting of Harrow School charter, 1572.
8. The opening of the New School room, 1615
9. The commemoration of the tercentenary of the School, 1871.

Other stained glass windows which are worthy of notice are the East window and the lancet windows of the chancel. The former, designed by J. N. Comper, was erected in 1908.

The glass of the lancet windows, designed by C. E. Kempe and his successor W. E. Tower at the beginning of the century, represents five of the joyful mysteries of the Blessed Virgin Mary and their foretelling in the Old Testament. Notice that on some of the splays of the windows can still be seen the original colour decorations, which were discovered when these windows were unblocked in 1894, as well as the 15th century additions.

The following five treasures of the church are of particular interest:

The Font of Purbeck marble belongs to the early 13th century.

The Oak Chest by the south door belongs to the same period.

The North Door, originally an outer door of the church, has been in use for nearly 800 years.

The Pulpit, a good example of late 17th century wood carving, was presented in 1708 by Tanner Arnold, Esq.

The Parvise, a room over the south porch contains evidence of Norman work. Traces of colour decoration of a later date remain on the roof timbers, and also on a carved stone niche, on the East Wall. This room was probably one of the three chantries attached to the church.

The church has thirteen ancient *Brasses*, some of the finest in the country. Many of them are to be seen on the floor of the chancel. A full list of them is given on page eleven.



Three of the five 12th century lancet windows, showing some of the original stonework and 12th century decoration. These windows were discovered and restored in 1894.

Brasses

The Church is exceptionally rich in brasses. Including some fragments, there are in all thirteen examples.

- 1370 Sir Edmund Flambard and his wife. The figure of the lady is missing. (*Chancel floor*).
- 1390 Sir John Flambard. (*Chancel floor*).
- 1450 Unknown priest, but possibly Robert Kyrkeham, clerk and keeper of the Royal Chancery Rolls. (*Sanctuary floor*).
- 1468 John Byrkhede, Rector. The head and part of the inscription have been recorded in Weever's 'Funerall Monuments' (1631) with the inscriptions to the Flambards. (*Chancel floor*).
- 1488 George Aynesworth with his three wives and fourteen children. (*South transept wall*).
- 1579 William Wightman and Etheldreda his wife. (*Chancel floor*).
- 1592 John Lyon and his wife Joan. John Lyon was the founder of Harrow School. (*Nave side of the north transept pier*).
- 1600 A civilian and his wife. (*Chancel floor*).
- 1603 John Sonkey and his wife Alice. (*North transept wall*)....
- 1613 Inscription to Katherine Clerke of Ruislip. (*Sanctuary floor*).

Not on view are the small headless brass of Simon Marchford, Rector 1442, a fragment of the inscription to Thomas Downer and his two wives 1502, and two palimpsests with inscriptions, one in verse and the other in prose to Dorothye, wife of Antony Frankyshe, and daughter of William Bellamy who died in 1574. On the reverse are fragments of Flemish engravings of 1400 and 1450.

The missing inscription to Simon Marchford is to be found in *Seperchral Monuments* (1786) by Gough.

Other Monuments of interest in the church.

- 1609 Two very fine but damaged painted alabaster figures of William Gerard and his sister. (*North transept*).
- 1785 Henrietta Malthus sister of Thomas Robert "Population" Malthus. (*Tablet over south door*).
- 1813 Memorial by Flaxman to John Lyon. (*Over brass*).
- 1824 Tablet on north wall to William Osgoode, sometime Chief Justice of Canada.
- 1831 Marble monument by Hopper, to Lord North. (*By North door*).

THE Church of St. Mary Harrow was built to the glory of God, and has been enriched by many benefactors through the ages. The Friends of St. Mary's is an association open to all who love this hallowed place and who wish to contribute to the upkeep of the ancient Mother Church of Harrow.

Details may be obtained from the Secretary, c/o the Vicarage, Harrow on the Hill.



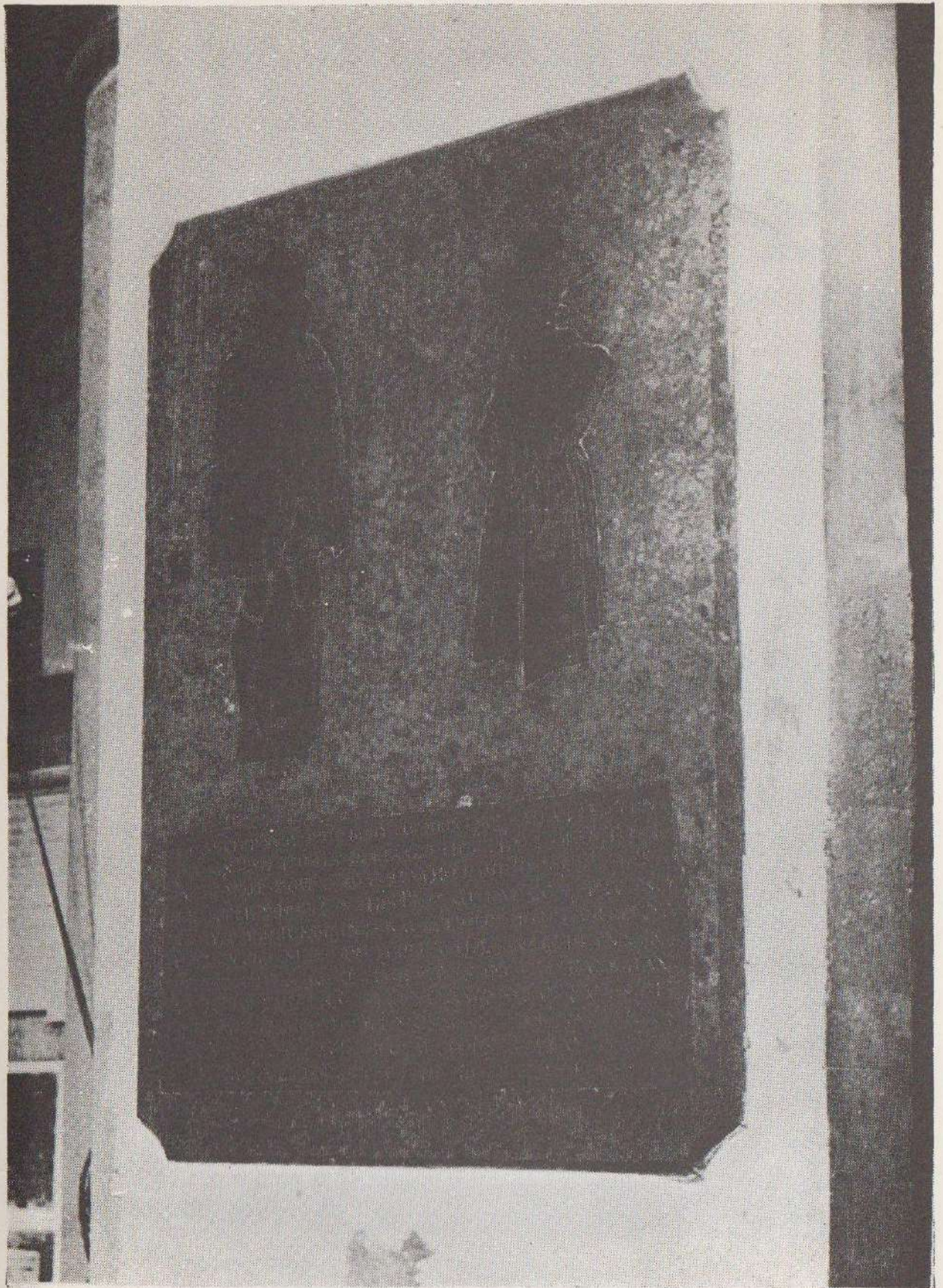
The font of Purbeck marble is early 13th century. Thrown out of the church in 1800, it was recovered from a local garden and replaced in 1846.



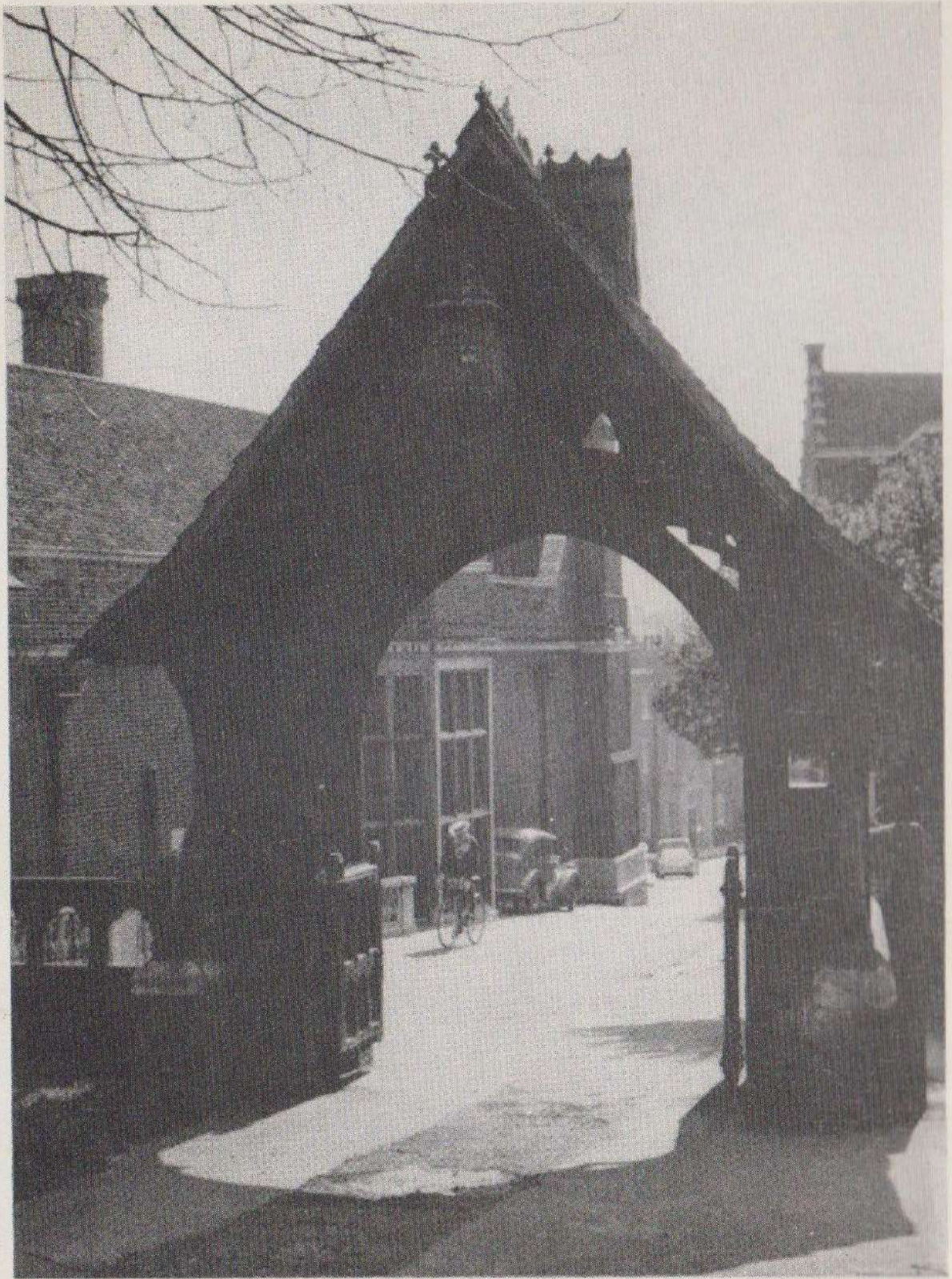
12th century oak door with its massive lock. Originally this was the main door of the church, but it was placed in its present position by the north porch in order to preserve it.



The West doorway with its chevron mouldings and mutilated capitals, dates from about 1140. It is now used only for access to the tower.



The brass of John Lyon of Preston, founder of Harrow School, and his wife Joan. John Lyon died in 1592 (the entry of his burial is in the parish records) and his body is interred near the chapel step.



*Photographs; Courtesy F. & J. Hare, Photographers,
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