

TROTTESLIFFE CHURCH.

BY CANON SCOTT ROBERTSON.

TROTTESLIFFE, or Trottesclyve, Manor was given to the See of Rochester by Offa, King of Mercia, in A.D. 788. Probably a small church was built here soon after that date.

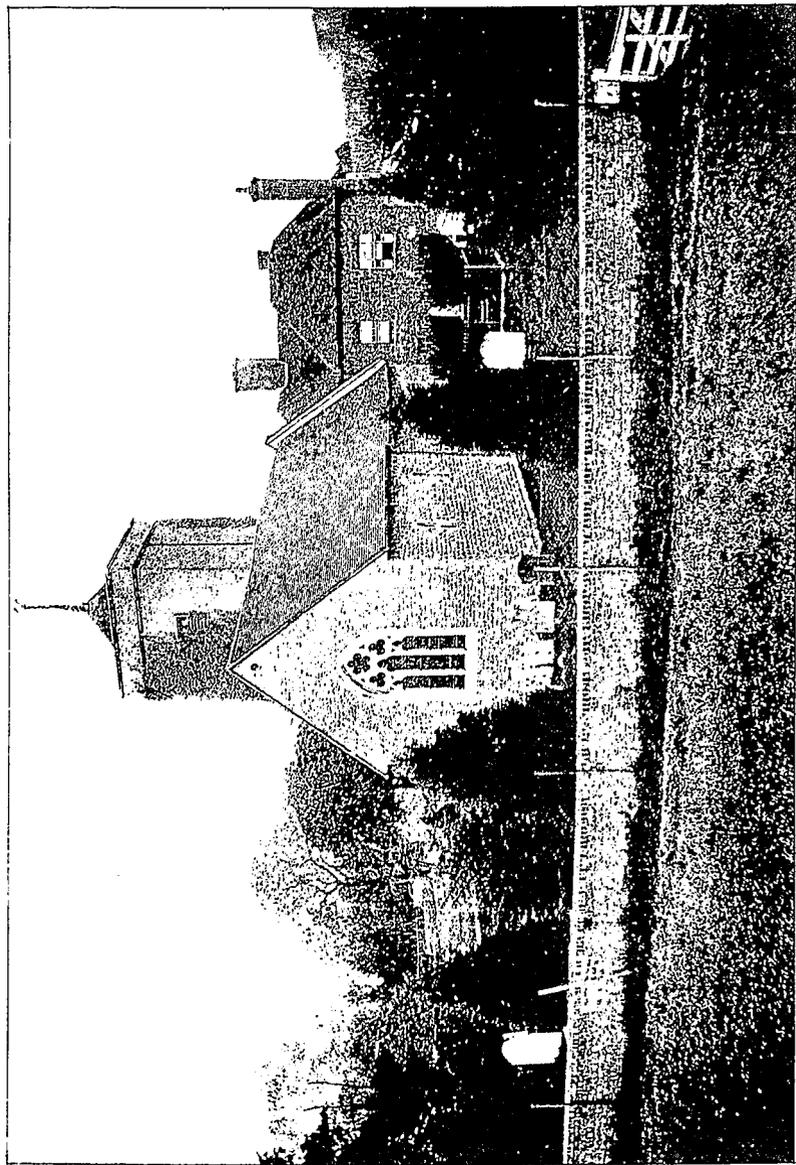
The existing chancel was probably built by Gundulf, who was Bishop of Rochester from A.D. 1077 to 1108. The tower seems to have been added, by Bishop Glanville, late in the twelfth century, when perhaps the nave was rebuilt. The Decorated windows were inserted by Bishop Hamo de Hethe.

As the Domesday Survey mentions a church here in or about A.D. 1085-6, we may say with tolerable certainty that the walls of this chancel are a little more than 800 years old. The church is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul.

We observe in the east wall, and in the north wall, very wide joints between the separate stones of the masonry, and we notice the regular straight courses in which those very irregularly shaped stones are laid. Upon the south wall we cannot discern these peculiar features of the ancient masonry, because a thick coating of "roughcast" covers the whole wall. A similar coating covered the east and north walls also, until the present rector, the Rev. C. W. Shepherd, acting upon Sir Gilbert Scott's advice, caused the roughcast to be removed from them. Thanks to Mr. Shepherd's action, we can see also that an unusually large quantity of "tufa" or "travertine" was used in these walls. All the coigns (or angles of the walls) are of tufa. The jambs and heads of the small Norman windows are of tufa. The tapering wall of the east gable was capped with tufa along the entire length of its top. At its apex we see much tufa built into the outer face of the wall. Some or all of this was originally used in capping the whole width of the tapering wall of the gable; but the masons who rebuilt the apex of the gable (when the new east window was inserted) simply replaced the tufa upon the outer face of the tapering wall, not throughout its entire thickness.

The plain flat appearance of the modern east window's sill and jambs was caused by the necessity of cutting away their mouldings, which were originally planned to fit the wall when it was faced with roughcast. On the removal of the roughcast these mouldings projected considerably beyond the surface of the ancient wall. So the mouldings were cut away.

The Norman windows of the chancel are worthy of close examination. Two in the north wall are in their original state on the exterior. There is no sill of ashlar to any of them. The small size



TROTTESLIFFE CHURCH,
FROM THE NORTH EAST.

of the masonry used is noteworthy. Generally five stones are used in each short jamb, and their narrow round arched heads are turned sometimes with eight stones, sometimes with nine stones, and in one case thirteen stones actually appear in the little round arch of the small window in the south wall. All these stones are of tufa, which resembles grey sponge in appearance.

It is difficult to discover in Kent any example of the earliest Norman walling and windows so well preserved and so unaltered as these in the chancel of Trottescliffe Church, thanks to the care of the rector, the Rev. C. W. Shepherd.

The tower, built against the middle of the nave's south wall, retains very little trace of its early date. I believe that it was built in the time of Gilbert de Glanville, who was Bishop of Rochester from 1185 to 1214. He rebuilt the episcopal manor house here, about A.D. 1187. At that period several Kentish towers were erected on the south side of the nave, as at Tong, Bapchild, Throwley, Preston by Faversham, and at Trottescliffe.

The plan of the tower at base (according to measurements made by the Rev. C. W. Shepherd) may be said to be externally 20 feet square, and internally 12 feet square. The actual measurements are exterior 20 feet 3 inches by 19 feet 9 inches, and interior 12 feet 1 inch by 11 feet 8 inches. The walls are 4 feet thick up to the first course where they batter to 3 feet, and they lessen in thickness as they rise higher.

From the tower we enter the nave through a doorway of the Transition period (between Norman and Early English). West of that doorway, higher up in the south wall of the nave and north wall of the tower, is a pointed doorway, the sill of which is nearly on a level with the apex of the entrance doorway. By means of wooden steps, or a ladder, access from the nave to the tower was afforded by this doorway. The aperture through the wall of the tower is roughly pierced, and contains no hewn stone.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries alterations were made in the tower. Its exterior buttresses were added, probably, in 1509 when repairs were going on, towards the cost of which Alice Deysey of Addington bequeathed a bullock.

A vestry is formed in the south-west angle of the tower, and in the window of that vestry are two ancient quarries, or diamond panes of glass. One bears the sacred monogram *ihs*, and the other a plain device conventional but somewhat floral.

The plan of the church as it now exists was thus formed and completed, probably, before or very soon after A.D. 1200. For 690 years that plan has remained the same.

In the reign of Edward II., or in the early part of his son's reign, Bishop Hamo de Hethe altered and improved the interior of the church. In the north wall of the nave is a two-light window inserted by him, which contains portions of good coloured glass; and on the south side of the chancel there is another similar window of the Decorated period. A piscina niche of that style likewise remains in the south wall,



TROTTESLIFFE CHURCH,
FROM THE SOUTH.

As the residence of Hamo de Hethe and later Bishops of Rochester, in their manor house here, greatly affected this church during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it may be well to dwell upon this for a few minutes. At Trottesclyve and Halling were manor houses of the Mediæval Bishops of Rochester. Halling Manor with its hamlet was worth £38 per annum, and Trottescliff £15, in 1360. Hamo de Hethe, Bishop of Rochester (1319-52), was as much attached to Trottesclyve as an occasional residence, as he was to Halling as his more permanent dwelling-place. In 1330, when Archbishop Mepham visited the diocese of Rochester, as Metropolitan, the local authorities at Rochester and Strood complained bitterly that their Bishop loved to remain at Halling and Trottesclyve, not visiting the rest of his diocese as he was expected to do. The animus of the complaint is betrayed by their concluding remark that his mode of episcopal life "injures St Andrew's Priory at Rochester and ruins Strood Hospital." He was at Trottesclyve in 1320, on 22 November.

Here, at Trottesclyve, the Bishop made use both of his own private chapel in the manor house and of this parish church.

For example he held ordinations in this church on the 2nd of March 1324-5, when he ordained, to Deacon's Orders, Roger Digge, rector of Cukkelestane (Cuxton), who had been instituted to that rectory (but without full corporal possession thereof) on the 12th of December 1324.* The Bishop had spent his Christmas at Halling, and came hither in the spring. He held another ordination in this church on the 11th of April 1327.

Here also was held a court of enquiry, respecting the non-residence of the rector of Mereworth, in May 1340.

Nor was Bishop Hamo exceptional among the Bishops of Rochester in his use of this church. Nearly a century later, Bishop John Langdon summoned Thomas Halle of Rochester to appear before him in this church, and he did appear here on the 25th of September 1425, to clear himself from a charge of heretical teaching against veneration of images, against pilgrimages to holy relics, and similar doctrines. Sixteen sureties appeared as his compurgators, and the Bishop charged him not only to abjure all such doctrines, but to give information as to any who used or read English books teaching such heresies as he was accused of. Evidently Thomas Halle was a century in advance of his age; and we to-day recognise that within the walls of this church one of the early English Reformers was tried for teaching doctrines which are now accepted by the Established Church of England.

Later still, in 1439-40, Bishop William Wells ordained in this parish church four Acolites and one Sub-deacon. The person who was here ordained Sub-deacon on that day, February 19th, 1439-40, was the rector of this parish, Marmaduke Skelton, who as an Acolite had been instituted to the benefice on the 30th of September 1439

* He received all the minor orders on the 16th of December 1324; was ordained Sub-deacon on the 22nd of that month; became Deacon on the 2nd of March, and Priest on the 27th of May 1325.

—nearly five months before he became a Sub-deacon. He was ordained Deacon three weeks afterwards in Town Malling parish church (on March 12, 1439-40). By mediæval church law a man could not be ordained Sub-deacon until he was twenty-one years old ; nor Deacon until some years after that.

In the manor-house chapel more of the episcopal transactions took place than were accomplished in Trottesclyve parish church. For instance, we read in Bishop Hamo de Hethe's Register (folio 174^b), that on the 16th of May 1339 the Bishop himself celebrated Mass in his chapel, and then admitted to Holy Orders, as an Acolite, Robert de Brundissch, who had been instituted to the rectory of Wolewych (*Woolwich*) nine days before.

Another class of business done generally in the manor chapel, when any Bishop of Rochester was at Trottescliffe, was the institution to benefices. For example Bishop John de Shepey, in the manor chapel on the 11th of April 1354, admitted to the rectory of North Creye, John de Tychemersh, who was presented to that benefice by Sir Robert de Northwode (Shepey's Reg., 261^b).

On the 21st of December 1353, Bishop Shepey held an ordination in Trottesclyve manor chapel, when four youths received their "First Tonsure" (Register, folio 260^b). From the date of this ordination we may infer that Bishop Shepey kept his Christmas at Trottesclyve in 1353.

The rector of "Troscliff" had to pay to Malling Abbey ten shillings per annum out of the tithes. (See Dugdale's *Monasticon*, iii., 381.)

From Wharton's *Anglia Sacra* we learn that Bishop Hamo de Hethe celebrated the Eastertide of 1322 at "Trottyscliff," and built there a new bakehouse and cowhouse or barton at a cost of £25. Summer and Whitsuntide were also spent here, because the hall of the manor house at Halling was being rebuilt. The Christmas of 1325 was spent here also. In 1327, during the second week in Lent, as the young King, Edward III., and his mother traversed Rochester diocese on their journey to Canterbury, they were met and welcomed by Bishop Hamo, who presented to the Queen two basins of silver worth £20 ; and then he returned at once to Trottescliffe. In 1328 and 1329 he spent twelve months at this place, arriving after the Feast of the Purification. This long period of residence he occupied with directing the erection of high walls around his court here, and also with rebuilding the Bishop's chamber, a kitchen, and a chamber for his clerical household. In 1333, Bishop Hamo spent all the autumn at Trottescliffe, whence he went to Mayfield to console Archbishop Mepham in his sadness ; returning again to Trottescliffe. In that year, to the disgust of the Rochester monks, he celebrated the Feast of their Patron, Saint Andrew, at Trottescliffe, and yet received the *excennium* or provision which (they said) was only payable when he celebrated St. Andrew's Feast at Rochester. In 1340 he dwelt much at Halling and Trottescliffe. Two years later he spent twelve months here (in 1342), when he caused the church to be repaired, as well as his own dining hall and

dormitory. In the year of the "black death" (1348) he was much at Halling and Trottescliffe, yet he lost thirty-two members of his household, who died of that terrible pestilence. During 24 Edward III. (1350) he was all the year at Trottescliffe, being old and decrepit. Within two years he died.

The coloured glass in Hamo de Hethe's nave window is worthy of close attention. It has all been well cleaned and refixed, by Ward and Hughes of London. In the heads of the two lights are elaborate canopies, well designed and well executed.

Above, in the apex of the window, is a Mediæval design which must be almost unique in a parish church. It represents the Holy Trinity. Contrary to Scriptural teaching, and to the orthodox teaching of the Church, God the Father (whom no man hath seen at any time) is represented as a man. The whole doctrine of the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord is evacuated of meaning by such a representation. Upon the knees of the old man, who is irreverently made to represent the Divine Person of God the Father, is a crucifix, to represent the sacrifice made by God the Son, over whose head appears the Sacred Dove, as the symbol of the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost breathed forth by God the Father. The sun, moon, and stars are represented as accessory details.

As to the mediæval furniture of the church, the wills of old parishioners, searched by the Rev. T. S. Frampton, afford a few hints.

In 1451, an image of the Virgin Mary stood in this church, with a light burning before it, and towards the maintenance of this light Richard Rowse left a cow worth 8s. In 1455, Ric^d Chaunceler bequeathed 6d. to this light, as did John Clyterowe in 1463, and John Tenaker in 1466. The sum of 8d. was bequeathed to it in 1470 by Wm. William. At a later date, in 1532, we find St. James coupled with St. Mary. Wm. Wolleryge then bequeathed one of his best kine to the light of our Lady and St. James.

Before the Great Crucifix or Rood, a light was burned which several testators remembered in their wills.

An image of St. Christopher was set up here, and also an image of St. Nicholas; and before each of these images tapers were kept burning, by the money bequeathed by testators, and by the gifts of the living.

Gifts for maintaining these lights or lamps in Trottescliffe church were not confined to pence and cattle. Land was left for their maintenance also. Thorpe, in his *Customale Roffense*, p. 38, extracted from the Registers of Presentments made at Visitations, mentions two garden plots (occupied by Mary Wade, widow) which were given to endow two lamps here, one to burn in the nave and the other in the chancel. He also mentions "another parcell of ground to find a lampe in the seyd chirche."

The monumental brass in front of the communion rails commemorates William Crofton and Margery his wife.* He seems to

* The inscription shows that the brass was placed here by the widow during her lifetime. It runs thus:—"Hic jacet Will'm^s Crofton Generos^s bacalla^r"

have been a lawyer of Gray's Inn, and a graduate B.C.L., who owned land in Trottescliffe. He died on the 18th of March 1483-4, and bequeathed to this church a silver gilt chalice and two silver cruets.

The existing Communion cup was made in 1576. A paten upon a foot, made in 1699, was presented by the Rev. Paul Baristowe and Ann his wife. Mr. Baristowe had been curate in charge of Trottescliffe, and here were buried both he (in 1715-16) and his wife (in 1705), but he was vicar of Graine in the Hundred of Hoo (Feb. 1688-9—1710).

The silver alms-dish, now in use, was presented September 11th 1821 by the Rev. Dr. W. Crawford, rector. During his Incumbency the church was repaired, and in October 1824 the pulpit from Westminster Abbey was presented by James Seager, Esq. (a London distiller). Its sounding-board is a handsome piece of inlaid wood-work, supported by a slight pillar of white wood, which is intended to represent a palm-tree.

In 1844 some restorations were effected here by the curate in charge, Mr. Wigan, but unhappily one of the southern Norman windows was then entirely renewed.

The present rector, the Rev. C. W. Shepherd, has expended large sums of money in draining and repairing the church. He spent £800 upon that excellent example of cut flint work, the west wall, which he rebuilt. The black flints used therein came from the Wrotham chalk pits, most of the rest are from the Northfleet pits. The size of the squared flints diminishes as the courses rise, until those in the apex are quite small. The cross in the apex is of blue stones.

The east window was inserted in 1875 by the present rector, in memory of his father. The west window was filled with stained glass in 1885. Its cost, £148, was defrayed from the proceeds of crewel embroidery done by girls in the parochial school. The artists were Ward and Hughes.

The little north window was filled with coloured glass in memory of the Queen's Jubilee.

In the two-light window, close to the entrance door, of one light (that to the east) the history is very singular. It formerly stood in Luddesdown church, of which Mr. Shepherd, senior, was rector. When that church was restored the light was sent here, but it was too narrow to fill the place where it now stands. The manufacturers therefore added a second border all round, and thus made it wide enough for the window here. It commemorates a brother of the present rector. Since it was sent here, another light has been filled in, to the memory of the late rector's mother.

The only bell in the tower is of good size, 31 inches in diameter, and was made by William Hatch in 1639.

In the churchyard (near the south-east angle of the chancel) is

Juris Ciuilis & legis p'itus ac Collega de Greysyn qui obiit xvij^o die Marci A^o dni. m^occcc^olxxxiij^o & Margeria ux^r ei^o que obiit . . . die . . . A^o dni. m^occcc^olxxx . . . q^or^m a'i'ab's p'piciet' de^s."

an early altar-tomb commemorating James Atwode, who died in May 1600. The parish registers are in very good condition, from 1540 onward, but lack the entries between 1550 and 1560. The Elizabethan transcripts were made upon parchment about 1599, by one William Wardropper (or Wardroppe), who states that he was sometime (*aliquando*) master of the school in this parish.

In one entry a baptism is said to have taken place on the day on which King Charles was beheaded. The present rector has fully indexed the whole of the parish registers in a very clear and able way.

The oldest register contains memoranda of the sums collected in Trottescliffe upon four Briefs, during the years 1658 and 1659. Such entries are very unusual for those years. One of the Briefs is stated to have been issued by the Lord Fairfax.

The Rev. T. S. Frampton has kindly favoured me with the following transcripts from the Register, and with Notes thereon:—

“By vertue of a breefe Granted by ye L^d Protector to the Parishioners of Cowden there was Collected in y^e parish of Trottescliff in Kent y^e sum^e of seuen shillings & six pence vpon y^e 8th day of August beinge y^e L^{ds} day in the year of oure L^d 1658.”*

“Alsoe here hath bene Collected for the vse of Katherine Leke of Middlesex widow the sum^e of ffowre shillinges vpon the 5th day of September in the same year of oure L^d 1658.”†

“Alsoe here hath bene Collected for Wappin, the Hermitage, &

* Extract from Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1658-9.

[Vol. clxxxi., p. 29.]

[May 20] 1658. “47. Petition of the inhabitants of Cowden, Kent, to the justices of peace at the assizes to be held at Maidstone 7 July 1657. On 1 May last at noon, a great and sudden fire broke out in our town, and was not put down till it had burned 8 houses, a warehouse, 2 stables, 2 barns and other outhouses, and the almshouse, with most of the goods therein, so that our damage was £1822, whereby we are, many of us, utterly ruined, and cannot provide for our families. We beg you to obtain a patent for us for a public collection.”

“Order for a patent for them to take the alms of the well-disposed in cos. Kent, Essex, Surrey, Sussex, Norfolk, and Suffolk.” P.R.O. 21 April 1892.

† Extract from Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1658-9.

[Vol. clxxxi., p. 62.]

June 15, 1658. “101. Petition of Katherine, widow of Jas. Lecke, malster, of Chelsea, Rich. Bringest, Mat. Humphreys, and Lucretia Jefferies, widow, to the Protector. On 24 May 1653, Lecke lost his house, outhouses, and whole estate, and a great quantity of malt and barley, for which he was in debt to others, value £1945 12s., to his undoing. The justices of peace examined and estimated the losses at this sum, which Lecke was unable to sustain, and the other petitioners lost £100 at least. Beg a patent for a Collection in London, Westminster, etc. With reference to Council, to give petitioners relief with the late sufferers by fire in London, 26 May 1655.” [1 sheet.]

“101, 1. Certified by 12 justices of the peace to the truth of the petition, and the good character of the parties. Hicks' Hall, 12 July 1653, certified as a true copy, 28 June 1654.” [2 pages.]

“101, 11. Lords Commissioners Whitelock and Lisle to . . . We commend this petition; the certificate of the justices was in our hands, but is accidentally

East Smithfeild the like sum'e of ffowre shillinges vpon the 3^d day of October 1658."*

"Collected alsoe in this p'ish the 3^d day of Aprill 1659 for the vse of Diuers Inhabitants of Brides neer fleet street London the sum'e of ffowre shillinges & six pence."

lost. We were eye-witnesses of the fire, and therefore the more affected by it. We beg relief for the petitioners. 12 May 1655, Chelsea." [1 page.]

"June 15. Order thereon for a collection in London, Westminster, Middlesex, Sussex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex, for their relief." [I. 78, p. 685.]

* Extract from Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1657-8.

[Vol. clxxx., p. 350.]

[March 30] 1658. "64. Petition of Rob. Tyler, Thos. Gunner, Wm. Booth, and Abraham Rowe, Justices of Peace of Wapping, Middlesex, for the inhabitants there, to the Protector, for letters patent to allow them to appeal to the charitably disposed.

"The inhabitants of Wapping, the Hermitage, and East Smithfield, to the number of 800 poor housekeepers, preferred a petition to us at the Quarter Sessions of Westminster, 5 Oct., showing that by an explosion of gunpowder on 3 July, in powder houses at Wapping, many houses were blown down and shattered, to their damage of £9665 17s. 6d., many people were lamed and maimed, and many have become miserably poor, having lost their kindred, and being destitute of their callings. On examination we found that 846 housekeepers had been losers to the amount of £9123 3s. 6d.; that many of them are poor seamen, and all except 89 will fall into great want unless aided. Hicks' Hall, 17 October 1657, 13 signatures.

"With reference to Privy Council, 24 November 1657." [1 sheet.]

"March 30. Order thereon in Council for a collection in London and Westminster, cos. Middlesex, Herts, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex." [I. 78, p. 429.] P.R.O., 10 May 1892.