

## EARLY-NORMAN MASONRY AT MAIDSTONE.

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THE accompanying photo of rough sketches (plans and elevations) is intended to illustrate the remains of an early-Norman building recently discovered at Maidstone. The remains consist of portions of the two side-walls of a building of indeterminate length running north and south, situated in the grounds of the Archbishop's Palace immediately west of All Saints' Church. One of the walls forms the western boundary of the churchyard,  $21\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the west front of the church and parallel thereto. The other wall,  $23\frac{1}{2}$  feet from its fellow, forms the east end of a fourteenth-century building called The Dungeon. The open space between the two walls is enclosed to the north and south by two fourteenth-century cross-walls, built at the same time apparently as the dungeon, and in continuous line with the dungeon's side-walls. Before these alterations were made in the fourteenth century, the early-Norman building probably stood in its original form. Its side-walls certainly ran further north and south than their remains at present indicate; and it seems to have been a building of large dimensions, and, for the time when it was erected, one of considerable importance.

A glance at the vertical section (No. II.) of the building shews that it had an undercroft or ground-floor apartment about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet in height from floor to the under-surface of the beams which carried the floor of the main or upper apartment. These beams, which



have been removed, were very massive, measuring nearly 16 inches by 12 inches, as shewn by the holes in the side-walls into which they were inserted. Sketches Nos. I. and III. shew these holes in plan and elevation, and No. II. shews them in vertical section. They have been filled with masonry. It will be noticed that the joists rested also on the offsets or wall-footings of 12-inch projection. The upper apartment was wider than the undercroft by the sum of these projections, and measured  $25\frac{1}{2}$  feet. Its height cannot be determined.

The present ground-level of the undercroft is slightly higher probably than was the original level, and the original level is some four feet lower than the present level of the churchyard;\* but the latter must now be considerably higher than it was when the Norman building was erected. The undercroft was lighted and ventilated by narrow vertical openings in the walls, immediately under the footings. One such opening, now blocked, may be seen from the churchyard, just above the ground, and behind a tombstone. It is sketched in the elevation (No. IV.) of the churchyard-wall.† In the western face of the same wall,‡ near the angle formed by this wall and the

\* See the vertical section, No. II. These measurements are only approximate.

† When this sketch was made it was difficult to come close to the wall at that point. The railings which enclosed it have since been removed. The opening should be shewn in No. IV. a few inches further north. Re-examination of the elevation in No. III. has revealed the signs of this opening on the inner side of the undercroft wall, and the elevation has been re-drawn to shew them. Here we may notice four corbels, about 16 inches below the offset, which must have been inserted in the Norman wall at the time of the fourteenth-century alterations.

‡ See Elevation III.

abutting fourteenth-century cross-wall, there remains one of the quoins—the northernmost quoin of an original opening—about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet above the floor-level of the upper room. This opening was blocked (with tufa) at some time before the fourteenth-century wall was built up against it, for between the wall and the blocking masonry there still remains some of the plaster with which the latter was faced.

The sides of the opening were square, not splayed, and the side that remains exposed by the removal of some of the blocking masonry has upon it portions of its original plaster. The opening is too low to have been a window of the upper room; the remains of plaster seem to negative the idea that it may have been a fire-place, and unless it was a mere recess in the wall it must have been a doorway. It is difficult to imagine what purpose can have been served by a doorway in this peculiar position, several feet above the ground on the outside. It might be hazardous to suggest that it opened on to a wooden bridge, affording communication between the early-Norman upper room and an early-Norman church. That an early-Norman church existed, probably on the site, or on part of the site of the existing church, is inferred from the mention of a church here in Domesday (1086).

The term early-Norman may be applied to any building erected during the second half of the eleventh century, or in the early years of the twelfth century. In previous Papers published in *Archæologia Cantiana* the writer has remarked that before the introduction of Caen stone the Norman builders used calcareous tufa, found in the neighbourhood, for all cut and squared stone in buildings in the Medway valley and some other parts of Kent. The quoin of the doorway (?)

described in the previous paragraph is composed of Caen stone, and it has the wide joints which are characteristic of early-Norman masonry; the date of the building may therefore be fixed approximately at 1100 A.D.

Parts of the churchyard-wall are evidently post-Norman in date, and the rough walling is composed of materials of different kinds, some apparently being the materials of some earlier buildings which had been pulled down. Here and there the wall contains cut and well-squared blocks of tufa, which, since Caen stone was the material used in the building which this Paper describes, must have come from some other and earlier building. It is not fanciful to recognize in these blocks of tufa the evidence and the remains—the only remains above ground—of the early-Norman church mentioned in Domesday.

The face of the early-Norman wall on the churchyard side has undergone so much patching, pointing, and general repairing that very little of its original facing remains.\* The facing on the other side of the wall, however, remains unaltered, except for the wear and tear of time. It shews all the characteristics of the masonry of the early-Norman parts of the Castle-wall at Rochester.†

Below the offset or footing the face is composed chiefly of large Kentish-rag stones, rough hewn, and

\* One bit of original facing is very distinct. It is sketched in the Plate (No. IV.). It may be interesting to note that it was this bit of early-Norman masonry which attracted the writer's attention, when walking through the churchyard with the Vicar of All Saints' and Miss Joy, and led to the immediate discovery of the rest of the early-Norman remains.

† The plates illustrating a Paper on "Mediæval Rochester" in Vol. XXI. of *Archæologia Cantiana* shew these characteristics.

laid in courses on their proper bed. Above the offset the more characteristic herring-bone facing is seen. The stones are laid in fairly even courses : large stones on their bed, smaller stones being tilted up sufficiently to make them fill the width of the course. The material is chiefly Kentish-rag, but there is also a quantity of tufa. The mortar-joints are all rough, and very large.

In the remains of the western wall of the building—the wall that now forms the eastern wall of the dungeon—the characteristic masonry can be recognized, though in parts it has undergone patching and repairing, and it has been cut through for the insertion of a window to light the dungeon. The signs of the offset have thus been obliterated, and above the line of offset later masonry has been added to make the wall rise flush in one plane from the ground upwards.

Within the dungeon the outer face of the undercroft wall can be seen above the level of the caps of the vaulting-shafts of the dungeon. Below that level the masonry is all of the date of the dungeon. A glance at the section of the wall (No. II. in the Plate) will make this plain to the reader, the floor of the dungeon being nearly six feet lower than the floor of the undercroft, and the latter being on a level with the springing of the ribs of the vault of the dungeon.

What purpose the early-Norman building served is at present unknown, and may always remain a matter of conjecture. The interest of the discovery lies in the fact that no masonry of so early a date is known to exist elsewhere in Maidstone, and that it forms the starting-point of the study of the history of the interesting site now occupied by the Church, College, and Archbishop's Palace.