

NOTES ON THE TOPOGRAPHY OF CRANBROOK CHURCH.

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THE topography of a large parish church always offers points of interest and problems for solution. The destruction wrought by time, fanaticism, altered requirements and (most of all) ignorance on the part of "restorers" has swept away so much in the way of screen-work, removed so many monuments, and falsified so much history that it is often most difficult to account for much that has been left. The dedication of the various altars formerly in a building and their position can, however, not infrequently be fixed by reference to the wills of former inhabitants, and the knowledge so gained will sometimes enable us to date not only the parts of a building with tolerable accuracy, but also to identify the tombs it contains, now despoiled of their brasses and inscriptions.

In Cranbrook Church we have evidence of the existence of at least seven altars besides the high altar, which was dedicated in honour of St. Dunstan the Archbishop. These were: (i) Our Lady, (ii) St. Thomas, (iii) St. Giles, (iv) St. Nicholas, (v) St. John Baptist, (vi) St. Katherine, (vii) Jesus Altar.

It will be convenient to take them in the above order, and, with the help of the wills to which reference has been made, to try and determine the position of each.

I.—OUR LADY.

There is fortunately no doubt whatever that this altar was in the north chancel. In *Testamenta Cantiana*, under Cranbrook on page 87 (East Kent), will be found several bequests for the new making of the Chapel of Our Lady in 1473 and onwards, whilst on page 90 (under *Varia*) Mr.

Arthur Hussey gives other bequests, "to the new work in the north part of the church," evidently the same thing.

Of burials in this new chancel, the first we have before us is that of Stephen Karkeregge, who in his will dated 1498 and proved 1500 (P.C.C., 9, Moone) wished "to be buried in the chauncell of Our Lady in the north side of the said chauncell by side the Image of o^r Lady and to o^r Lady light in the same chauncell xx^d." The old clothier family of Lynche also appear to have had their burial-place here. Symond Lynche in 1500 (P.C.C., 14, Moone) desired to be buried "in the chauncell of Oure Lady," and William Lynche in 153 $\frac{2}{3}$ left £7 "for a preest to sing and praye for my soule, my father, my mother and wyffs soules in the chapell of Our Lady in Cranebroke w^t condicon that he do say in thende of his masse everytime the gospell missus of Angelus Gabriell w^t the collett *Graciam tuam*, and every Fryday in the same yere *O bone Jesu* with the Collett" (P.C.C., 34, Dyngeley).

Thomas Colyer in 152 $\frac{4}{5}$ (P.C.C., Bodfelde) wished "to be buried in our Lady Chauncell within the church of Cranebroke and I bequeth ten pounds towards the bying of a Tabull to serve for our Lady awter in the forsaid chauncell with the condicion that the parishens of Cranebroke will bye it or pay the rest." This would have been either a painted wooden reredos, or more probably one of those alabaster "tables" (as they were called), which were very popular at the time, with some special carving of a scene or scenes in the life of the Blessed Virgin.

Another well-known Cranbrook family, the Courthopes of Goddards Green, also made this chapel their resting-place. Alexander Courthope in 1525 (Cons. Court, Cant., vol. 14, fol. 99) left directions that he was to be buried "in Our Lady's Chancel," and John Curtop in 152 $\frac{7}{8}$ (P.C.C., 26, Porch) desired that "a prest should singe in o^r Lady Chapell." This family continued to bury there until the seventeenth century at least, and there is a gravestone to Elizabeth, daughter of Peter Courthope, 1639, under the east window of the chapel.

According to Hasted there was, in a window "at the upper end" of the north aisle (he does not say the *east* window, so it may have been one of the northern windows), a representation of John Roberts with a request for prayer for himself, his son Walter, and the latter's three wives. Mr. Wm. Tarbutt, in his *Annals of Cranbrook Church*, assumes from this that the Roberts family had their burial-place in this chancel, and builds up a grotesque theory (to account for the Roberts' monuments in the south chancel) that at the Reformation they migrated there to show their disapproval of their forefathers' religious beliefs. The whole story is quite improbable, and is moreover not only not borne out by any evidence, but is clearly contrary to the directions given in the wills of members of the Roberts family, not one of whom asks to be buried in Our Lady's chancel [see later under St. Giles].

With regard to the position of this chancel, it may be useful to point out that in England there was no rule as to the place of the Lady Chapel. Here it was on the North side, but in many churches it was on the South—Rochester Cathedral, Charing, Hawkhurst, and Maidstone may be cited as examples. It would appear to have been simply a matter of convenience only, and that no religious significance was attached to it.

II.—ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY.

The evidence is conclusive that St. Thomas's chapel was on the south side of the church, but whether it embraced the whole of the southern chancel or shared it with St. Giles remains a matter of doubt. The evidence is as follows:—

Thomas Henle (or Henley) in 1495 (P.C.C., 29, Vox) desired "to be buried in the church of S^t Dunstan in the South Yle before Saint Thomas. Unto the awter of Saint Thomas where my body restith two clothes oon of them to be a bove for the face of fyne velvet w^h a semely crucifix of golde werke in the medill & with two Images of Mary & John oon to be at oon corner & that other Image at that

other corner and that other cloth to be at the fote of damaske and to the same awter two curteyns of sar-cenett."

His son Gervase Hendley made his will on 15 April 23 Henry VIII. (proved 6 May 1534, P.C.C., 14, Hogen). He desired to be buried "in the chauncell of Saint Thomas in Cranebroke aforesaid at my pewe dore. To oon honest Englissh preest to singe for my soule, my wifes soul, my father & moder soules & all xpen soules at the awter of Saint Thomas in Cranebroke. To the said awter of Saint Thomas 40^s to be bestowed as foloweth that is to sey to bye oon masse boke printed, oon albe and a vestment of blak worsted or of other blak to be occupied at the said awter on feriall daies by the discrecion of the church-wardeyns."

His son, again, Sir Walter Hendley, Knt., whose will is undated but was proved in 1550 (P.C.C., 10 and 30, Coode), directed that his body was "to be beryed vnder the south wall before my sete or pewe in the churche of Cranebroke and there shall be leyd uppon my body one Tombe of marble lyenge in the seller at Clerkenwell which I have prepared for the same cause." This tomb may possibly be that in the south-east corner of this chancel.

From the above it is clear that this was the general place of burial of the Hendleys of Coursehorne. Another family connected with this chancel was that of Sheffe. Thomas Sheffe in 1520 (Cons. Court, Canterbury, vol. 13, fol. 16) wished "to be buried in the church of S^t Dunstan of Cranebroke in the chancel of Saint Thomas before the Image of our Lady of Pity." His brass, somewhat mutilated, but with the letters T. S. and his merchant's mark, is still on the floor of this chancel. If we could be sure that it has not been moved it would fix the position of the Image of Our Lady of Pity, viz., on the north side of the altar of St. Thomas. His son, Richard Sheff, in his will dated 1554 (proved 1557, P.C.C., 34, Wrastley), also wished "to be buried in Saint Thomas Chauncell besyde the body of my father there."

III.—ST. GILES.

The first mention of this altar is in the will of John Roberd 1460-1 (P.C.C., 22, Stokton). He desired "to be buried in the church of S^t Dunstan of Crambroke before the altar of Saint Giles," and left 40s. "uppon an honest Tombe over me and Agnes my wife byfore the auter of Seint Egidy [an Englished version of Egidius, the Latin form of Giles] with a scripture making mension of vs." This may be the stone despoiled of its brasses in the centre of the south chancel, which shows indents of a civilian and wife in the dress of about 1460. His son "Walter Roberthe of Crambroke, esquier," in his will proved 18 Oct. 1522 (P.C.C., 28, Maynwarynge), desired "to be buried in the churche of Crambroke betwene the ymage of our Lady of Pytye and my pewe and there I wylle a stone be leyde vpon my body." He also desired Thomas his son "to find an honest secular priste to sey masse and celebrate divyne service in the parysshe churche of Cranebroke at Seint Gyles awlter for the sowles of my father, my mother, my wyves sowles [he had three], my sowle and all cristen sowles according to the last will of John Roberthe my father." The Roberts memorial, now under the east window of the south chancel, claims the sixteenth-century tomb against the east wall to the north as that of Walter Roberts. This may be so, but I would suggest that Walter Roberts' memorial is the stone robbed of its brasses (for a man and three wives) now let into the east wall of the south chancel, between the two monuments above referred to. Neither the sixteenth-century tomb nor the stone with the matrices can be in their original positions, and so far Mr. Tarbutt is right, but they were never in Our Lady's chancel on the north side of the church.

Other bequests relating to St. Giles' chapel are, "To the work of the chapel of Saint Giles 10^s" (Stephen Higham, 1477, Cons. Cant., A. 3, fol. 7). "A prest to syng within the chapel of Saint Giles" (William Pynde, 1520, Cons. Cant., A. 15, fol. 3). (*Testamenta Cantiana.*)

Where then was this chapel? The will of Richard Pende, 1509 (P.C.C., 17, Bennett), gives us a clue. He desired "to be buried in the church of Cranebrook before the aulter of Seynt Gyls. To the edifying of a chapell" [*i.e.*, by enclosing a certain area within parclose screens] "in the *south* side of the church of Cranbrook before the aulter of Seynt Gyls vi markes."

The chapel of St. Giles, the burial-place of the Roberts-family, was therefore on the *south* side of the church, and it is evident that they did not make the change fantastically attributed to them by Mr. Tarbutt, and repeated by the Rev. J. Cave Browne in Vol. XXII. of *Arch. Cant.*, p. 227. The Roberts window in the Lady Chapel was no doubt only their contribution to the redecoration necessitated by the rebuilding already referred to.

If the evidence quoted under this section and that of St. Thomas, *supra*, be taken together, it will be seen that a difficulty arises as to the respective domains of these two chapels. St. Giles's altar dates at least from 1460, whilst the earliest mention we have of St. Thomas's altar is 1495, and then it is stated to be in the "South Yle." St. Giles's chapel is never referred to as a "chancel," yet all the later references are to "the chancel of St. Thomas."

The Rev. T. A. Carr, vicar of Cranbrook, in his paper read to the Society in 1873 (*Arch. Cant.*, Vol. IX., p. xcv.), considered that the south chancel was the chapel of St. Giles, but the evidence of the Hendley wills seems conclusive that this was the chapel of St. Thomas. May not the solution be found in suggesting that the eastern part of the south chancel was dedicated in honour of St. Thomas and the western portion to St. Giles? The chancel is 32 feet from east to west and 20 feet in breadth; there would therefore be room for two small chapels each 16 by 20 feet, and it is of course possible that the chapel enclosed by screens referred to in the will of Richard Pende may have extended some way into the south aisle. It will not be forgotten that Walter Roberts in 1522 wished to be buried between the image of Our Lady of Pity and his

pew, and this image, according to Thomas Sheffe's will (1520), was in the south (or St. Thomas's) chancel.

IV.—ST. NICHOLAS.

The evidence we have under this heading is not clear in itself, and must be taken in conjunction with other known facts. The references to this altar are as follow:—

“I leave a table of Alabaster [another of the carved panels] to the altar of S^t Nicholas in the foreseid church of five marks value.”—Thomas Portreffe, 1490 (P.C.C., 33, Milles).

“To be buried in the chirche of Saynte Donston in Cranebroke byfore the aulter of Saynte Nicholas. To the light of the Holy Trinite there fownden by me v^s. To the light of our Lady Pitie in the saide church xij^d.”—Thomas Baker, 1493, proved 149 $\frac{1}{2}$ (P.C.C., 16, Horne).

“To be buried in the parishe church of Crambroke in the place nere where my good wif Dame Elizabeth lieth buryed, and in the place of my buriall I will shalbe a Tombe made by myne executors if yt be not made in my lif, the same Tombe to be made in such sort & maner as vnto my degree apperteyneth. An honest preist to syng or saie masse & praye for my soule at the aulter of Seynt Nicholas in the parishe church of Cranebroke nere vnto the which I haue willid my bodie to be buried.”—Sir John Baker, knt., dated 12 Jan. 1557, proved 30 Jan. 155 $\frac{1}{2}$ (P.C.C., 24, Welles).

It is clear from the above that the Bakers' place of burial was before the altar of St. Nicholas, and as we know the Baker vault was at the east end of the nave on the south side, we must conclude that St. Nicholas's altar stood either on the south side of the rood screen in the nave, or at the eastern end of the south aisle against the screen, which would have shut off the south chancel. If the second pier of the nave arcade (from the east) be examined, it will be seen that the base of the column has been cut away, and in

all probability a screen went across the south aisle here, forming, to the eastward of it, a chapel, and this may very reasonably be taken to be the position of St. Nicholas's altar. The Baker monument, now at the west end of the north aisle, was originally erected at the east end of the nave on the south of the chancel arch, which would be near the site of the altar of St. Nicholas if the above surmise be correct, and in agreement with Sir John Baker's will.

V.—ST. JOHN BAPTIST. VI.—ST. KATHERINE.

The evidence for these two altars is as follows:—

“I give two corteynys to the altar of S^t John Baptist.”
—Will of John Foster, 1479 (Cons. Cant., vol. 2, fol. 497).

“To the chapell & aulter of S^t John Baptist in the parish church of Cranebroke £5.”—Richard Barre, 153 $\frac{3}{4}$ (P.C.C., 30, Dyngeley).

“To the chapel & aulter of S^t Katherine the virgin & martyr in the said church 40^s.”—Richard Barre, 153 $\frac{3}{4}$.

We have thus no evidence of position, but as we have accounted practically for the south aisle we may reasonably assume they were in the north aisle, and an examination of the second pier of the arcade from the east shows marks of where a screen was formerly attached, shutting off a portion of this aisle as on the south side.

In the north wall is a fourteenth-century niche for the image of the patron of one of the altars.

VII.—JESUS ALTAR.

This is named by Giles Andrew, 1527 (Cons. Cant., vol. 15, fol. 14), *Testamenta Cantiana*, and was probably against the rood screen on the north side. The support of the Jesus Mass was a favourite object of devotion, and there are many bequests thereto. It had nothing to do, as Mr. Cave-Browne imagines it had, with Lollardism.

VIII.—IMAGES WITHOUT ALTARS.

In *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XXII., p. 227, Mr. Cave-Browne, misled by some incomprehensible notes by Mr. Tarbutt respecting the "Host of St. Clement," mentions an altar of St. Clement. Mr. Arthur Hussey has kindly verified the reference at Canterbury. The will (A. 15, fol. 75) is in English, and the passage in question runs: "I bequeeth unto the light of St. Clement there 6^d." There existed, then, an image of St. Clement in Cranbrook Church, but evidence of an altar of that dedication is not to be found.

For the many images with which the church was decorated and the lights burnt before them, reference should be made to Mr. Arthur Hussey's notes in *Testamenta Cantiana* (East Kent part, pages 86 to 91). The position of most of these it is not now possible to fix. A suggestion may be made as regards that of "Our Lady in Jesyn" (a representation of the Nativity). There was an image of Our Lady at the north door. May not these two have been one and the same, and the niche which still remains in the wall near the north door be the site? The group would have required, not the usual upright canopied recess for a single figure, but just such a broad recess as we have at this identical spot.

The image of Our Lady of Pity was, as we have seen, in the south chancel.

With regard to the image of the "Head Hallow" or patron saint of the church, it is a remarkable fact that wills and other documents rarely specify the exact position of this figure. A Tenterden testator desires to be buried before St. Mildred (the patron) "before where the sepulchre is placed." Now, since the customary place for the sepulchre was on the north side of the chancel, the situation of the image of the patron saint at Tenterden is clear enough. Again, at St. Alphege, Canterbury, there is a reference to the image of St. Elphe on the north side. Such would appear to have been the usual position for the image of the patron saint.

At Cranbrook, accordingly, the image of St. Dunstan would stand on the north side of the high altar. In cases where the church was dedicated in honour of Our Lady, her image, as that of the patron saint, was similarly placed on the north (or gospel) side; but otherwise (as at Cranbrook) the place for the image of Our Lady would most probably be on the south side of the high altar.

NOTE.—Special thanks are due to the Rev. Bertram Lamplugh for kindly preparing the topographical plan of Cranbrook Church. For the sake of historical accuracy he has omitted the modern vestry at the east end of the south chancel, thus showing in its original position the priests' doorway, which was shifted to the south side of the chapel of St. Thomas when the said vestry was added. He has also omitted the post-Reformation baptistery for immersion. He does show, however, the steps which now lead to this same baptistery (as also to the chamber over the porch) because they are ancient. They are the remains of an original newel staircase, which probably led up to the south aisle roof. The stair is interesting as affording evidence of the width of the earlier south aisle, coeval with the porch and narrower than the existing south aisle.—ED.