

THE APSE IN KENTISH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

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THE existence of an apse in an ecclesiastical building is a matter that invites investigation, and towards that end I submit the following notes on the occurrence, nature and probable date of all apses in the county that have come under my notice, with a few plans and a reference wherever possible to the best published plans of the rest. Quite likely there may be other examples unknown to me, particularly if they have been destroyed, and I should appreciate any further information, correction, corroboration or amplification of my list.

(1) PRE-CONQUEST APSES.

The Kentish group of pre-Conquest apses, and particularly the Canterbury members of it, are of prime importance. They have been fairly comprehensively dealt with. The best account is in *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest* by A. W. Clapham, F.S.A., but the pioneer work of Micklethwaite in the *Archæological Journal* (Vols. LIII and LV) and Peers in the same publication (Vol. LVIII) should not be neglected, nor should Professor Baldwin Brown's second Vol. of *The Arts in Early England*.

CANTERBURY. *Christ Church.*

No remains of the first church are visible, but the plan has been reconstructed from the well known account by Edmer, by Professor Willis (*Architectural History*), Sir William Hope (*Proc. S.A.*, XXX, p. 137) and Professor Baldwin Brown. All of these agree in placing apses at both ends and giving a basilican character to the plan. But in view of the ascertained plans of other contemporaneous

churches, it might be worth while to re-examine the evidence with the object, if possible, of producing a plan more in accordance with the normal type.

CANTERBURY. *SS. Peter & Paul.*

This church has been completely and thoroughly excavated, beneath the nave pavement of S. Augustine's Abbey, and the plan (*Arch.*, LXXVII, p. 201) indicates an apse. No traces of this were discovered, as the entire east end had been removed to make room for Wulfric's "Round" in 1057.

CANTERBURY. *S. Mary.*

Here again, excavation to the east of SS. Peter and Paul has revealed scanty fragments of the church of S. Mary. An apse can only be supplied by analogy. Plan in *Arch.* LXXVII.

CANTERBURY. *S. Pancras.*

Excavation, together with the remains still above ground, has given the whole plan, and this church is the type specimen for the group. The plan is given, with details, in *Arch. Cant.*, XXV, pp. 222ff. The portion of the east end uncovered, while definitely proving the apse, was insufficient to give many details of form, a matter of some moment.

CANTERBURY. *S. Martin.*

A puzzling church, whose architectural investigation has been marked by considerable difference of opinion. But it seems fairly clear now that the existing chancel is the earliest part, being the nave of the first church. The form of the east end is purely conjectural and is given apsidal from analogy. Plan in *Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, p. 281.

CANTERBURY. *SS. Quatuor Coronati.*

The only evidence for the above is to be found in Bede. (*Ecc. Hist.*, Bk. ii, Ch. vii. A.D. 619) and no architectural details are available. The site is not known, but, belonging to the Canterbury group in time (sixth to seventh century), it in all likelihood agreed in plan.

Thus, of the six churches in Canterbury belonging to the Augustinian period, the apse is definitely found in one example only (S. Pancras), but there can be little doubt that it formed the eastern termination in every case.

ROCHESTER. *S. Andrew* (First Church).

Foundations uncovered here, in 1889, beneath the west front of the present Cathedral have been taken to be the remains of the first church, founded in 604. The apse marked out on the floor of the north aisle, just inside the door, indicates a semi-elliptical plan. (*Arch. Cant.*, XVIII, p. 264, XXIII, p. 212.)

ROCHESTER. ? *Another*. (Second Church.)

On Sir William Hope's plan (*Arch. Cant.*, XXIII) above-mentioned a fragment of curved wall is shown underneath the south wall of the nave. This was discovered by Mr. J. T. Irvine in 1876. It is possible that this may be part of the apse of the monastic church that was described as ruinous when Gundulf decided upon the general rebuilding (*Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, p. 192).

LYMINGE. *S. Mary*.

The foundations of the church founded by S. Ethelburga, c. 635, are exposed in the churchyard. The building is one of the S. Pancras type and the evidence shows a stilted semi-circular apse. Plan in *Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, p. 308.

RECVLVER.

The complex of walls forming the ruins of Bassa's church (A.D. 669) and its successors has been unravelled by Messrs. Peers & Clapham (*Arch.*, LXXVII, pp. 241ff). The apse has been definitely shown to be semi-circular within and polygonal without. (Plan *op. cit.*, p. 245.)

LYDD.

The remains of a basilican church are incorporated in the present church, at the north-west angle of the nave. They have been interpreted by Canon Livett, F.S.A. (*Arch. Cant.*, XLII, pp. 72ff) and myself (*Arch. Cant.*, XXXVII,

pp. 177ff). In each account an apse is inferred, though the conjectural plans differ. There are precedents for both, but in the absence of remains the matter must remain open. There is also a difference in the question of date. I suggested a pre-Danish date, but Canon Livett and Mr. Clapham make it much later, tenth century, mainly on the evidence of the double-splay window. But this window is not entirely satisfactory. I am inclined to regard it as a later insertion, particularly as there appears to be clear evidence that there was not a similar window westwards.

WHITFIELD *alias* BEUESFELD.

In *Arch. Cant.*, XL, pp. 141ff, Canon Livett demonstrates the probability of an apse to the east end of the first church here. There are no remains but its existence is inferred from the lines of the later chancel and the blocked "arch of triumph." The date suggested is "Saxon" but I should prefer a later date.

(2) PARISH CHURCHES AND CHAPELS.¹

RICHBOROUGH (FLEET). *S. Augustine.*

Excavation within the Roman Fort at Richborough has revealed the foundations of a church with a segmental apse, the angles squared externally. A plan and details will be found on Plate xlvii and on pp. 33-40 of the Richborough Report II. The date assigned is twelfth century.

EYNSFORD. *S. Martin.*

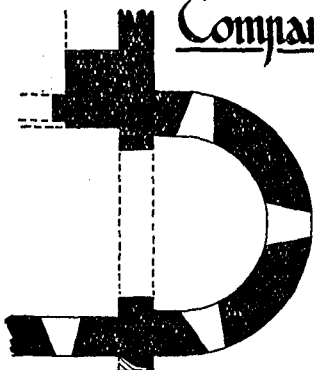
This church has a large apse still standing. Of twelfth century date, it was remodelled in the following century. See plan on p. 251.

MAPLESCOMBE.

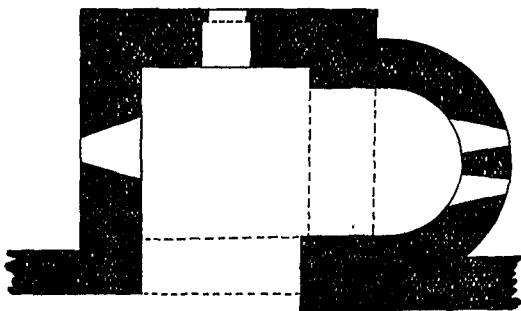
There is here a ruined church of simple type and early Norman date, with an apse of the same width as the nave and with no structural division between nave and chancel. Plans and descriptions in *Invicta Magazine*, 1913, pp. 25ff, and in *Journ. B.A.A.*, XXXIV, pp. 224ff.

¹ See also p. 228 of this volume.—ED.

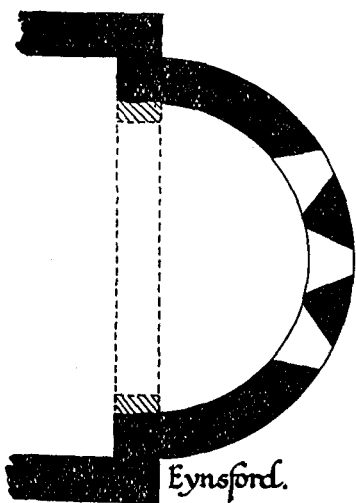
Comparative Plans of Kent Apses.



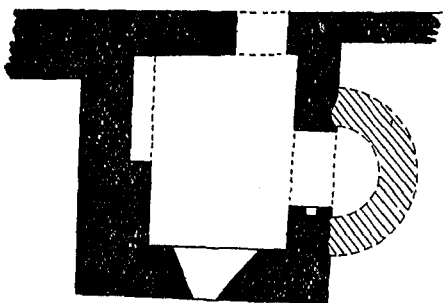
S. Bartholomew, Chatham.



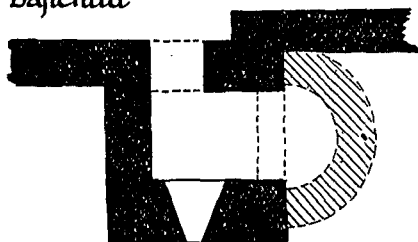
Godmersham.



Eynsford.



Banchild



Kingsdown

Note: All post-12 cent details omitted and conjectural restorations hatched.

Scale of feet



F.C. Elliston - Erwood, F.S.A. mens. et del. 1931.

SUTTON, near Dover.

An apse still remains here, but it is almost entirely modern, though according to Glynne (*Churches of Kent*, p. 190) the details of the original twelfth century church have been maintained. There is a very small plan in *Arch. Cant.*, XL, p. 154. Possibly some part of the original apse is preserved.

GODMERSHAM.

This is the only example of a Tower apse still remaining in Kent. It is of rough rubble and of twelfth century date. See plan on p. 251.

BAPCHILD.

A tower apse of similar date and character to the above stood here, the blocked arch from the tower still obvious in the east wall. See plan on p. 251.

KINGSDOWN, near Wrotham.

A third example of the tower apse was here and similar evidence remains in the east wall of the tower. See plan on p. 251, and also *Arch. Cant.*, XXXV, p. 111.¹

AYLESFORD. *S. Blaise*.

This chapel which stood in a detached part of the parish, near Offham, is reported to have been apsidal. (Fielding : *Records of Rochester Diocese*, p. 23.) I have been unable to find any trace of this building.

NEW ROMNEY.

In *Arch. Cant.*, XXXVIII, pp. 198-9, I suggest an apsidal termination for the magnificent Norman church here. There is no architectural evidence for this, but in spite of Mr. Torr's remarks (*Arch. Cant.*, XLII, p. 259) I still think the apsidal form very probable.²

¹ Excavations on the site (Summer, 1931) have failed to reveal any trace of this supposed apse. The walls uncovered belong to a later chapel—the building of which may have caused the total destruction of the apse and its foundation. The existence of an apse, however, can hardly be doubted.

² The location of walls beneath the choir stalls may have an important bearing on this question, but up to the present I have not seen their position plotted on a plan.

(3) HOSPITALS.

CHATHAM. *S. Bartholomew.*

A very interesting though much restored example of a mediæval spital of the twelfth century with its apsidal termination still standing. See plan on p. 251.

HARbledown. *S. Nicholas.*

The apsidal east end of this hospital chapel, founded c. 1084, has been destroyed but there are sufficient remains to make it clear that the original church resembled Maplescombe (*vide supra*). A plan by Canon Livett is reproduced in *Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, p. 295.

(4) CATHEDRAL AND MONASTIC CHURCHES.

CANTERBURY. *Christ Church Cathedral.*

The apse appears, or did appear, here as follows:—

Second Cathedral, eleventh century. A central apse to the choir, with square ended aisles and transeptal apses.

Third Cathedral, twelfth century, early. Central apse destroyed and replaced by ambulatory with three chapels, the outer pair of which were apsidal. Each transept had two apsidal chapels.

Twelfth century, later. The central square chapel was replaced by another apsidal ambulatory, with an almost circular eastern chapel.

Plans in Willis (*Canterbury Cathedral*) and *Arch. Journ.*, Vol. LXXXVI, plate facing p. 239.

CANTERBURY. *S. Augustine.*

Excavations here have revealed a plan where the eastern arm of the abbey church, built 1070 onwards, consisted of an apsidal ambulatory with three radiating chapels, together with apsidal chapels in each transept. Plan in *Arch. Journ.*, Vol. LXXXVI, plate facing p. 278.

DOVER. *S. Martin.*

There is a plan of this priory in *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. IV, plate iii, which shows a square ended choir, flanked by aisles

terminating in apses, semi-circular inside but partly squared on the exterior somewhat similar to that of Richborough Chapel (*supra*). Each transept is shown with two apsidal chapels and the chapter house is also apsidal. Date 1131-39.

DOVER. *S. Martin-le-Grand.*

The plan of the destroyed eastern arm of this collegiate church was in form similar to that of S. Augustine's, Canterbury, i.e., an apsidal ambulatory with three apsidal radiating chapels (*Arch. Cant.*, IV, p. v). Date c. 1100.

ROCHESTER. *Cathedral Priory.*

The plans of this church, as laid down by Sir William Hope in his monograph on the Cathedral and Priory, in so far as they relate to the planning of the eastern arm of Gundulf's church, have not been universally accepted, mainly on account of the abnormal lay-out there indicated. A re-reading of the evidence by Dr. Fairweather, F.S.A., in *Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, pp. 187ff, suggests an east end of three parallel apses, with apsidal transepts, which certainly is a more normal twelfth century arrangement and will probably find acceptance.

LEDES (OR LEEDS). *Priory.*

"In 1846 the late Mr. C. Wykeham-Martin caused some excavations to be made on the site of the Priory, and part of the Crypt, the foundations of the apse of the Priory church . . . were revealed." Further information about this excavation would be welcomed, particularly plans, measured sketches or photographs.

The Priory was founded c. 1119.

MINSTER IN THANET. *Monastic Manor House.*

The latest addition to apsidal churches in Kent is found in the evidence supplied by excavation at the so called Minster Abbey. The foundations of a twelfth century apsidal chapel have been located. Plan in *Arch. Journ.*, LXXXVI, facing p. 213, reprinted, with a note by Canon Livett, *Arch. Cant.*, XLII, pp. 225ff.

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