

PLANS OF, AND BRIEF ARCHITECTURAL NOTES ON, KENT
CHURCHES

PART IV. TROTTESLIFFE, SS. PETER AND PAUL, BISHOPSBOURNE,
S. MARY, AND ADDITIONAL NOTES ON BEARSTED

By F. C. ELLISTON-ERWOOD, F.S.A.

TROTTESLIFFE. SS. PETER AND PAUL (Plan 15)

TROTTESLIFFE (or Trosley) Church is a small simply planned building, consisting of a nave and chancel without any chancel arch, to which has been added on the south-west corner, a late tower. I had always regarded it as an early Norman church without any peculiar or unusual features and it was, therefore, somewhat of a shock when a sheaf of papers, sketch plans, measurements and photographs was handed to me for study, for therein was propounded the theory that the eastern portion of the building was the earlier, to which at a later date had been added the present west part of the church, now the nave. This in itself would not be an impossibility, but the manner in which it was suggested the addition had been made was certainly unusual. A study of the accompanying plan (No. 15) shows that the exterior of the church is devoid of any noteworthy features except the two projecting angles (a' below) in the middle of each of the north and south walls. One of the sketches in the collection above referred to was something like this :

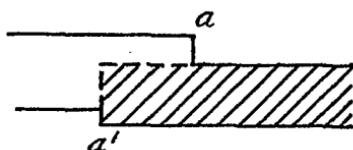
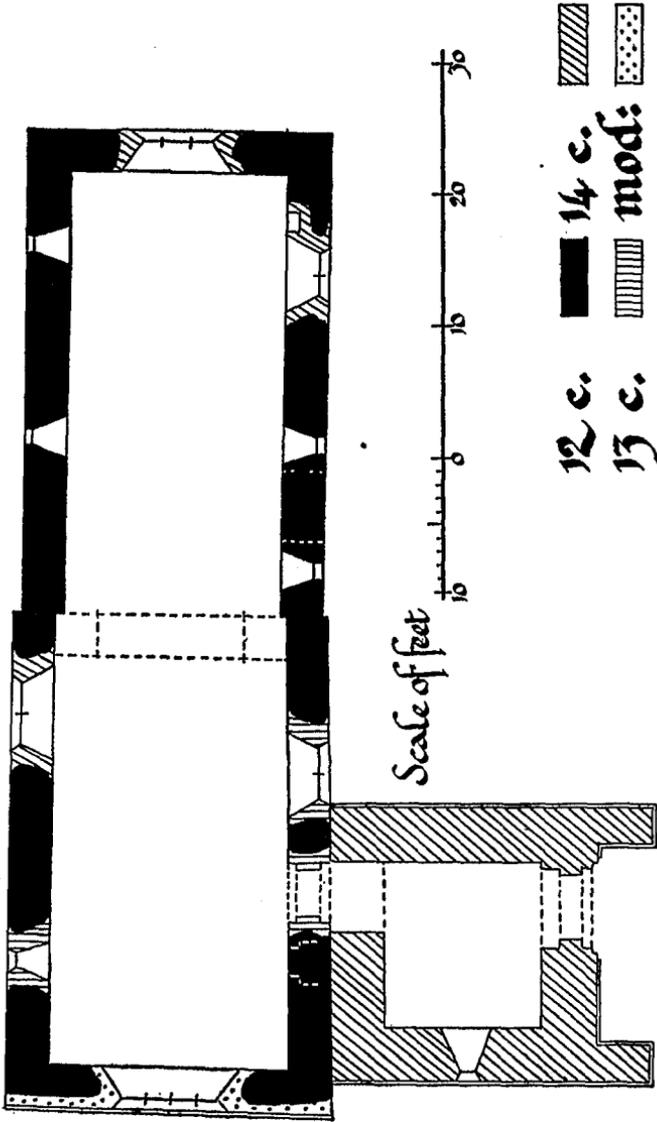


FIG. 1

The purport of it was that the eastern part had been first built and later its west wall had been removed, and the two ends of the lateral walls inserted into a new extension westwards in the manner shown, which was held to account for the position of the various angle projections. Such a method of church extension was unknown to me, so in view of the forthcoming visit of the Society to the church (May, 1949) I determined to investigate the problem. I made a plan, and in this case I took unusual precautions to ensure the correctness of my measurements, especially regarding the position of "a" and "a'."

Trottescliffe, Kent. Ss: Peter & Paul.



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PLAN 15.

and the result was as I suspected, the exterior and interior coins were in a straight line and not as shown in the sketch above. That point being settled, the history of the fabric becomes much easier to read. It is that of a simple early Norman church, merely differing from the more usual plan in the greater length of its chancel, of which there are several examples, notably Darenth (*Arch. Cant.*, LXI (1948), Plan 11). I cannot discern any factors that would differentiate in date between the eastern and western parts of the church. The coins already mentioned and those at the east end of the church are all of tufa, and save where obvious repairs have taken place, they are indistinguishable one from the other. The factor that might have helped would have been the character of the western angles, but these have been completely destroyed, and the west wall (in itself a good piece of knapped flint technique) with its coins is modern work. The position of the chancel arch, now removed, may give rise to some doubt. I should have preferred it east of the interior coins but a window of twelfth century date, which to my mind is *in situ*, precludes its being placed there, so there is no alternative but to place it as on my plan. The notes already mentioned recognized the same difficulty, and got over the problem by stating that the window in question had been moved from further east, opposite a similar one on the north, and where now a Decorated window takes its place, but I can see no evidence for this, and I doubt very much whether there would have been in the fourteenth century much solicitude for a small and no doubt weathered Norman window. The thirteenth century saw the insertion of windows and a doorway in the nave, but the great building period was the fourteenth century, when in addition to other windows and a small piscina, a somewhat massive tower was erected at the south-west angle. In the early church there was no provision for a tower, so when one was needed it was built with its thick walls up against the south-west corner of the nave with the result that the church is entered through some 7 feet of wall. The floor space is very small and now it is divided into halves by a wooden screen to form a small vestry. There does not appear to have been any means of access to the upper part of this tower from within, but on the interior nave wall, above and to the west of the existing door, is a blocked-up opening that suggests a door and an ascent by a ladder inside the church. The only other feature of note is a large insertion of recent brickwork that may probably indicate a window (or a chancel door) now removed, and the place patched up with brick.

BISHOPSBOURNE, S. MARY (Plan 16)

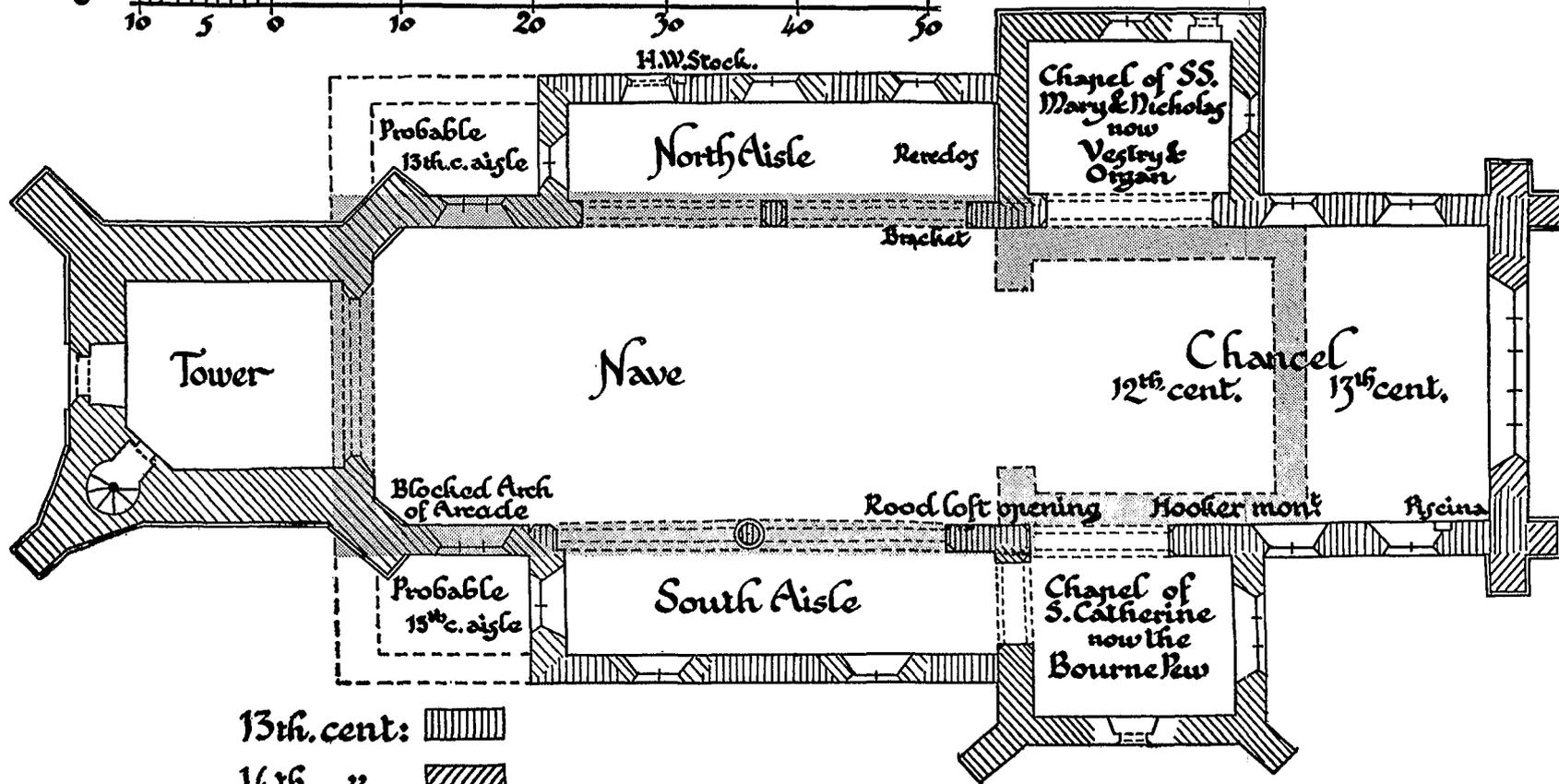
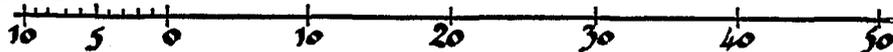
Bishopsbourne is a small, rather obscure village situated in a valley below Barham Downs, and is famous for its literary associations

with such diversities as the sainted Hooker and Joseph Conrad rather than with architecture, but both Bourne House and the church are not without interest. Unfortunately the latter has undergone one or two rather drastic restorations with the result that though the fabric is to-day in very good condition, any vestiges of early structures are almost non-existent. It would be too much to expect anything of the pre-conquest church that almost certainly stood here, but of its successor, the twelfth century church, I failed to detect a single stone, and my suggestion for the building of this period, as shown on my plan in a stippled tint, while almost certainly correct, finds no confirmation in existing fragments. But taking it as a foundation, it is clear that the church was considerably enlarged in the thirteenth century by the addition of aisles to the nave and by a widening and extension of the chancel. Architectural features belonging to this time are : The north door in the north aisle with an external Holy Water stock, the nave arcades (though the arches themselves have certainly been rebuilt) and practically the whole of the chancel and its windows, except that in the east. It is highly probable that the arcades each had an extra bay to the west ; traces of the arch on the south still remain, though that to the north had entirely disappeared. Fourteenth century work is negligible, and is confined entirely to the east wall, where a larger window was inserted and buttresses added. The following century was, however, a very busy one, the chief addition being the western tower. Till this time there was no tower and probably this feature was due to the Hawte family, who then held the manor. The whole of the west end of the church was taken down, together with the two western arches, the tower was built in its entirety with four large angle buttresses and then it was united with the body of the church by new walls on the line of the arcades, and new west ends to each aisle, which were thereby reduced to their present dimensions.

Further additions belonging to this period were the two chapels to the north and south of the chancel. That to the north, now occupied by the vestry and the organ, still preserves enough of its fittings to be certain that it was intended for a chapel, probably dedicated to St. Nicholas. That to the south may be the chapel of St. Catherine but is now, and for some time has been, known as the Bourne Pew and bears no traces of piscina or altar fittings. This, of course, is not unusual as such things were often removed at reformations or restorations. This is in brief the architectural history of the church, though the Hooker Library and monument, the window near the rood loft doorway (designed in all likelihood to give more light to the rood loft), the glass of several periods, some woodwork in the Bourne Pew, the brasses, plate, bells and the ancient font lying neglected near the newer and meretricious specimen of 1850, are all worth examination.

Bishopsbourne, Kent, S. Mary.

Scale of Feet



- 13th. cent:
- 14th. "
- 15th. "
- Recent

The probable extent of the 12th. cent. church tinted thus

F.C. ELLISTON-ERWOOD, F.S.A., Mens: et Del: 1948.

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Above the arcades on both sides of the nave are some traces of medieval painting not in good preservation and not too easily interpreted, but portions of a Last Judgment with the condemned being led away in chains, the Weighing of Souls, a possible "Harrowing of Hell" (a figure of Christ with swords and a number of lesser figures) and some incidents from the lives of SS. Nicholas and Sebastian, are not without interest. Two things at least are missing: the "piece of Stone on which the Archangel Gabriel descended when he saluted the Blessed Virgin" bequeathed by William Hawte, probable builder of the tower in 1462, and the reredos of painted alabaster bequeathed by Edward Mynot, Town Clerk of Canterbury in 1487. This latter would have been preferable to that which now supplants it.

FURTHER NOTES ON BEARSTED CHURCH

As mentioned in my notes on this church (*Arch. Cant.*, LXI (1948), pp. 52 and 56), the discovery of parts of a respond and an arch of early date in the NW. respond of the existing nave arcade will entail some modification of Plan 13 in that part of my paper. I propose to deal with the discovery and its implications in some detail, pausing, however, to emphasize that similar discoveries elsewhere are quite likely to require a revision of any schemes of architectural development that I may put forward, which are obviously founded on evidences apparent at the time of my visit to the church, and not on subsequent discoveries.

The remains revealed at Bearsted are very important for they may mean that another example must be added to the small list of pre-conquest aisled churches in this country, but before any conclusions are drawn, let the features be described, as well as the manner of their discovery. While removing a Tablet from this part of the church some workmen uncovered part of an arch, but not thinking it of any importance, they covered it up when making good the wall surface. They did, however, report the discovery to the Vicar, who in turn informed me. My conclusion, without having seen the arch, was that it confirmed my dating of that part of the wall as twelfth century, but it also implied an aisle on this side, and my blue overprint on the plan given (No. 13) would, therefore, require the addition of a narrow aisle of probably two bays, of twelfth century date.

Later on, however, at the request of the Parochial Church Council, the Society's Curator, Mr. L. R. A. Grove (Curator of Maidstone Museum), and Mr. W. Neville Terry, with Mr. J. W. Bridge of Maidstone, removed the cement rendering and once more the arch was to be seen, and pursuing the matter further, the respond of this arch was uncovered some 4 feet from the east wall of the tower. There were seven courses of Tufa, an abacus of the same material, chamfered on its east side only, and above that a segment of an arch with a chord of just

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over 3 feet and consisting of four voussoirs (see Fig. 2). These upper stones were of Kent Rag. The whole of the soffit of the arch and the east side of the respond was covered with a thin skin of white, hard plaster, seemingly contemporaneous. The abacus was badly weathered

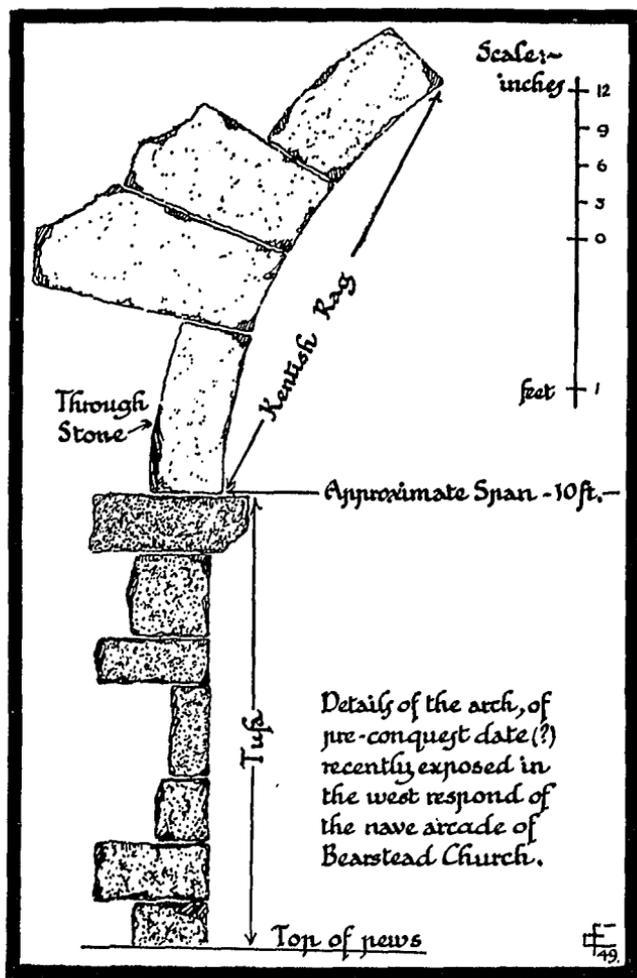


FIG. 2.

but was probably also plastered. Further work resulted in the wall being pierced in one place and the complete thickness of the arch was shown to be 2 ft. 7 in. This was the discovery, further details of which may be seen in the line drawing of the arch and which was enough to show that an aisle had existed here before the present one, and which

at first I was content to accept as Norman. But there were complications. I was not in the first place entirely happy about my original suggestion for the twelfth century church. None of its walls were of the thickness (3 ft.) that is almost invariable, and it was because there was nothing whatever to suggest an earlier church, that I was content to compromise with a 2 ft. 9 in. wall. But now we have a wall of 2 ft. 7 in. which is too thin to compromise over. In my original plan, though I showed the north wall of the early church on the line of the present arcade I did not date any part of the existing wall as earlier than fourteenth century. The question is, therefore, "Can this newly discovered fragment be the remains of a church earlier than the Norman?" "Can a pre-conquest date be established?"

The respond and its abacus are of the calcareous Tufa of the Medway Valley, a material always accepted, in Kent at least, as an evidence of early Norman building. Canon Livett's paper on the use of this stone (*Arch. Cant.*, XX (1893), p. 137 ff.) gives several instances of its use in Roman and early Norman times but does not specifically mention its use in the pre-conquest period, nor can I call to mind any early church of the pre-Norman period where it is employed. But I see no reason why it should not have been used in an intervening period, especially in a county where it is plentiful. Canon Livett, while not admitting that the material was quarried in pre-Norman times, allows that there may have been instances of tufa taken from destroyed Romano-British buildings. The coin stones themselves are of an irregular size and shape but they do not appear to be in "long and short" technique, nor do I think they are "through" stones, i.e. extend in one piece through the whole thickness of the wall, though of this there is no certainty as the opening up of this amount of wall would be dangerous to the rest of the fabric. This evidence then must be considered neutral. The abacus itself is in a very rotten state but its chamfered edge is quite clear and being on the east face only may possibly be considered early; I cannot deduce anything from the white plaster that covers the reveal and arch soffit, save that it appears to be contemporary.

The four stones of the springing of the arch that remain *in situ* are of ragstone and of large size, though not even approximately equal, and the joints between them are not radial. Further it is now certain that the lower stone is a "through stone" though those above it are in the usual medieval technique of an ashlar facing with rubble filling.

Now most of these features are to be found in pre-conquest buildings, and some, such as the "through stone," are not found elsewhere. One feature not mentioned is, however, puzzling. The span of the arch I calculate as approximately 10 ft., but the distance between the faces of the responds is about 2 in. more than this. This is unusual;

in fact, the opposite is generally the case, as at Lydd (*Arch. Cant.*, XXXVII (1925), Fig. 1, at p. 177) where the arch span is a little more than the clearance between the piers. I cannot offer any explanation for this, nor as far as I know can it be used for dating purposes. The span of the arch as given above—10 ft.—is rather wide for a pre-conquest arch, but it is found at Wing in Buckinghamshire, also a basilican church.

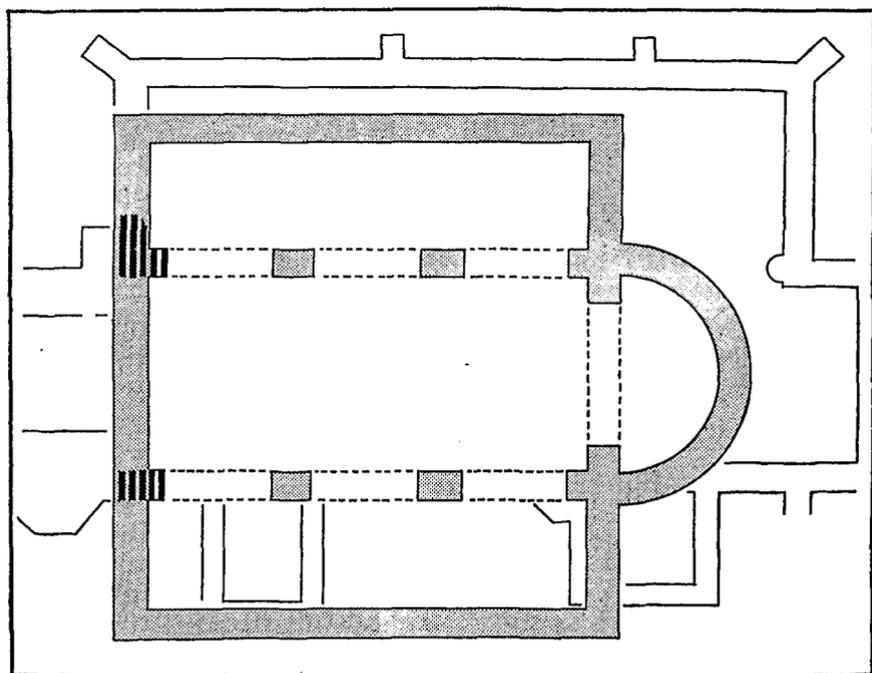


FIG. 3. Suggested plan of the Pre-Conquest Church (in tint) at Bearsted, superimposed on part of the plan of the present Church. (This is a diagram only, and not to the same scale as plan 13.)

Summing up this evidence it seems that while there is nothing that militates against a pre-conquest date for this church (and a Saxon church is mentioned in *Textus Roffensis*), save the rarity of the aisled basilican type in this country, the thin walls, the "through stone" and the type of masonry are definitely early, and after much deliberation I have come to the conclusion that the arch must be regarded as Saxon. As to the plan of the church, it cannot be other than basilican. A single aisle will not do at all, and if we have an aisle to the north we must put one to the south, again as at Lydd or Wing. The south wall of Bearsted must be the representative of an earlier arcaded wall, and

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it may not be mere coincidence that the reconstructed church that I now present (Fig. 3), based on that of Wing, suggests an early respond (corresponding to that just discovered) and at least one of the piers in those parts of the south wall that I had already indicated as earlier than the remainder. The apsidal plan of the eastern arm is entirely without authority; it is inserted as a suggestion only, but there are analogies. Further, allowing for an arcade of three 10 ft. wide arches and 3 ft. piers (again on the analogy of Wing), the chancel arch of the old church corresponds with that of its successor, which may or may not be fortuitous.

Note. In Part I of these Notes (Volume LIX, 1947) it was said that all plans are reproduced to a scale of 16 feet to 1 inch. By no fault of the Author, and only to economize in costs, the plans of Bishopsbourne and Trosley are not reproduced to this scale though they are, of course, accurate to the scale printed on them.—EDITOR.