

PLANS OF, AND BRIEF ARCHITECTURAL NOTES ON,  
KENT CHURCHES

SECOND SERIES. PART I.

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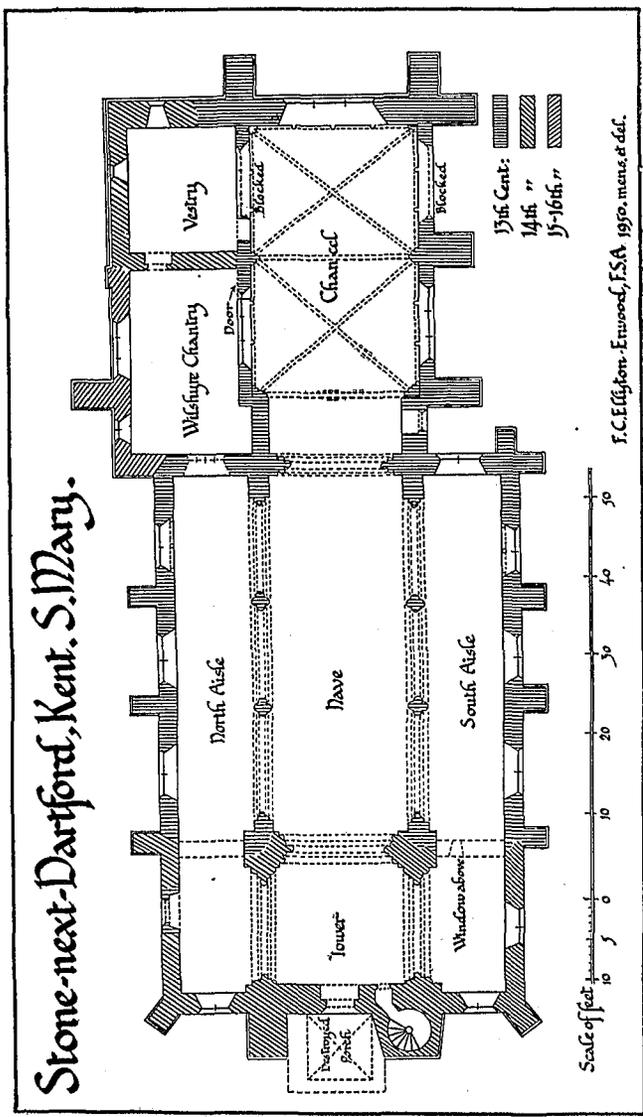
THE resumption of this series of notes on Kent Churches, after an interruption extending over two years, during which it was not possible to prepare the necessary plans, affords an opportunity of adjusting the scale of the reproduced plans to that most generally used, i.e. 24 feet to the inch. The need for uniformity and for economy is thus happily met. Subsidiary plans which are sometimes necessary to make the story more lucid will be reproduced to a scale of either 32, 40 or 48 feet to the inch, as convenience demands, but in every case a scale will be given on the plan.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, STONE-NEXT-DARTFORD

There is but little necessity to dwell at great length on the architectural details of this church. Every book on English church architecture gives illustrations of its most important features, and there are the accounts of Edward Cresy (1840, before the restoration) and G. E. Street (*Arch. Cant.*, III, 1861, after restoration) which between them contain almost everything the student may require, except an historical plan.

Most writers, past and present, dwell at length on three features, viz. the unity of the fabric; its alleged association with the Abbey of Westminster; and lastly, the gradual growth of ornament from west to east. Of these matters the first is untrue, the next is unproven and improbable, while the last is not uncommon. All, without exception, avoid offering any solution to the problems that a careful study of the fabric will present. This is an attempt to supply this omission.

Of the church or churches of pre- and immediate post-Conquest times that may have occupied this site, there is no evidence. There is plenty of re-used material, Roman brick fragments, stones with diagonal tooling and pieces of calcareous tufa, all likely constituents of an early wall, but there is nothing that will give a clue to the plan or extent of any building anterior to that now existing. There was a complete rebuilding in the 13th century, and it is around this that difficulties arise.



PLAN 1

## NOTES ON KENT CHURCHES

These can be summarized thus :

- (a) The aisles are extended to the west and are clearly of a later date than the main portion of these aisles. The thirteenth string course of the eastern part of the church stops abruptly opposite the tower piers.
- (b) The west tower is obviously of two dates, shown by the character of the capitals and the base molds.
- (c) The present entrance in the west bay of the north aisle is an insertion, if, indeed, it is not a composite feature made up from two other doorways.
- (d) There are traces of a vaulted western porch of 14th-century date.
- (e) The stair turret to the tower is an addition and a somewhat clumsy piece of construction.
- (f) Finally there are the two half arches that span the aisles at the termination of the 13th-century work, one of which, the south, has a window above it, with a splay to the west, visible only inside the church.

These factors are, of course, to be considered in addition to the more obvious extensions of a vestry and the later Willshyre Chantry. The collection of fragments built into the wall of the south aisle must not be ignored in estimating the character of the rebuilt church, and the ravages of fire and too zealous restoration must also be borne in mind.

The solution of all this appears to me thus. The 13th-century church consisted of the present chancel, an aisled nave of three bays only and a western tower standing free on three sides, i.e. not included between aisles. Major reconstructions took place in the next century. The aisles were extended one bay further west, thereby enclosing the tower. The north and south walls of this tower were pierced and the present 14th-century arches built, the tower now becoming a part of the nave. This may have had the effect of weakening the tower, so the two half arches (in reality parts of the original west walls of the aisles) were put in as internal buttresses. The new stair turret was built. But where was the old one? I think the above-mentioned window supplies a clue. The original tower stair was in the angle between the south wall of the tower and the west wall of the south aisle, and this enigmatic window must have been put in to give light to the first few steps. Opening as it did to the aisle the amount of light it could give was small, but the church as a whole is remarkably light.

The present entrance, badly weathered and a strange medley of 12th- and 13th-century forms, is certainly an insertion in a 14th-century wall and may have been originally in the west wall of the tower, from

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whence it was removed when the porch, of which traces still remain, was built. There is some indication in the bay *east* of this doorway, that a porch or entrance may have stood here; there is a large area of what seems to be later blocking.

Street (*op. cit.*) gives a different explanation of the varied features of the tower without considering the other points I have detailed, and maintains that the moldings of the arches above the 14th-century caps are of 13th-century date. Without a ladder it is difficult to be certain, but I thought that even from the ground I could detect 14th-century characteristics.

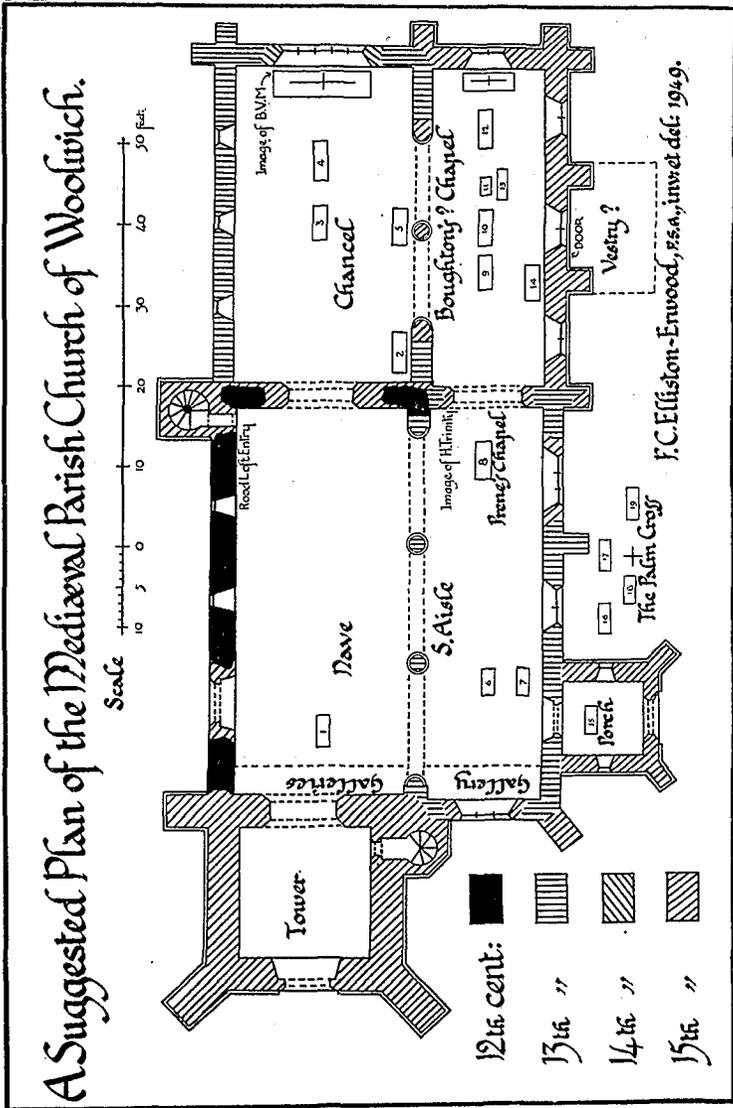
An unusual feature is the bay that intervenes between the chancel arch and the commencement of the vaulting of the quire proper. This is covered by a pointed barrel vault and in the south wall is a blocked up doorway. It seems a perfect setting for a rood screen and loft, but such things came later, and there appears to be no indication of the position this screen may have occupied. Finally, the architectural fragments preserved in the south aisle indicate a scheme of ornament and architectural decoration of which no trace is left, but which would have formed an ideal setting for the fine series of paintings that have been preserved for posterity by Professor Tristram's faithful reproductions. The mention of "old boards nailed across the chancel arch" seems to suggest another lost painting, probably a Doom.

### THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH OF ST. MARY (? ST. LAURENCE), WOOLWICH

The present church of St. Mary (Magdalene) is a brick and stone structure of no great architectural pretensions, built as one of the fifty churches sanctioned by Parliament for the metropolis and its surroundings, and was particularly provided for by 5 Geo. ii. c.4 and 12 Geo. ii. c.9. Its architect is unknown unless it was Mathew Spray of Deptford, generally described as a bricklayer, a word that most likely implied rather more than it does to-day.

The old church had been in a very precarious state since the beginning of the century and was pulled down in 1740, when the new church was ready for occupation. A few scattered stones in the churchyard adorning rockeries are obviously of 12th-century date, mingled with broken purbeck slabs that once covered the bones of local worthies. But fortunately there is enough material available in other directions to make it possible to produce a plan of the vanished medieval church which can be regarded as inherently probable and correct in all save absolute measurements. This matter is:

- (a) S. and N. Buck's engraving of the "North Prospect of Woolwich," 1739, which shows the old and the new churches side by side, just previous to the destruction of the former in 1740.



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- (b) A similar picture of the old church only, with a very small but useful block plan, dated 1690. This is reproduced in Drake's "Hundred of Blackheath" and the source is given as from the King's Library in the British Museum.
- (c) A MS. account of the church and its monuments written by E. Steele in 1734. This was once in the Phillips collection, but is now in the Woolwich Public Library.
- (d) *Testamenta Cantiana*.

The information itself is as follows :

1. The church consisted of two "isles" and as many chancels.
2. The entrance was on the south side.
3. The chancel was separated from the aisle by an arch.
4. The north chancel was entered by two "spacious" arches.
5. At the west end of the church there were galleries.
6. William Prene "quondam Rector hujus ecclesiae," but at the time of his death Vicar of Lyminge, Kent, built the tower of the church and also founded a chapel there, in which he was buried, 1404.
7. Thomas Hethe wished to be buried in the porch of the church of the Blessed Mary of Woolwich, 1458.
8. Nicholas Boveton (Boughton) desired to be buried in the new chapel "that I have lately caused to be made in the Parish Church of Woolwich," 1517.

All of this information has been incorporated in the accompanying plan and it will be noted in favour of the scheme proposed that it accords in almost every detail with the general architectural sequence evidenced by many other churches.

Ignoring the high probability that a pre-conquest building once occupied the site, the story commences with a small 12th-century church of the Dode or Paddlesworth type (*Arch. Cant.*, XXI, p. 260) and of approximately the same size. One wall at least of this early church survived till the destruction of the building in 1740, for Buck's drawing clearly shows an expanse of wall with three small round-headed windows high up under the eaves, a typically Norman arrangement. Further, the row of dormer windows indicates an attempt, late in date, to bring more light into a very dark nave, such as were common in these early churches. The usual enlargement in the following century was an extended chancel and one or more aisles and a porch, and the small plan mentioned above with the Steele MS. information confirms these additions as all on the south side. Generally speaking the 14th century is not noted for major architectural changes in small churches, any additions being mainly of the nature of windows or doors, but the 15th century is always a prolific one.

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At Woolwich we have Rector Prene's tower at the west end, his chapel at the end of the south aisle (Steele) where was his tomb, and last of all the entirely new chapel erected by the great Woolwich family of Boughton, east of the aisle and south of the chancel, from which it was separated by the "spacious" arches. One other feature remains. On Buck's drawing on the north side is a small lean-to building at the junction of the nave and chancel. This can hardly be the vestry mentioned by Steele for there is good reason for siting this on the south side, nor can it be an aisle or transept. I interpret it as the rood loft stair in an external turret for which the position is a normal one.

### THE CHURCH OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, APPLEDORE

The plan accompanying these notes is a revised version of that prepared for the late Dr. F. W. Cock's admirable account of the Church, which appears to have had at least nine re-issues. It was based on a plan prepared by Messrs. Bourne of Woodchurch, Architects for the renovations of 1924-5.

A summary of the development of the building is somewhat as follows :

1. A normal early Norman church is shown in the small plan, though there are no material evidences of it.

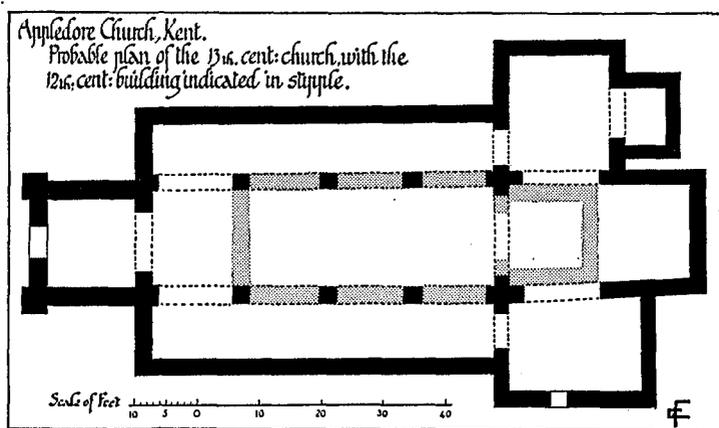
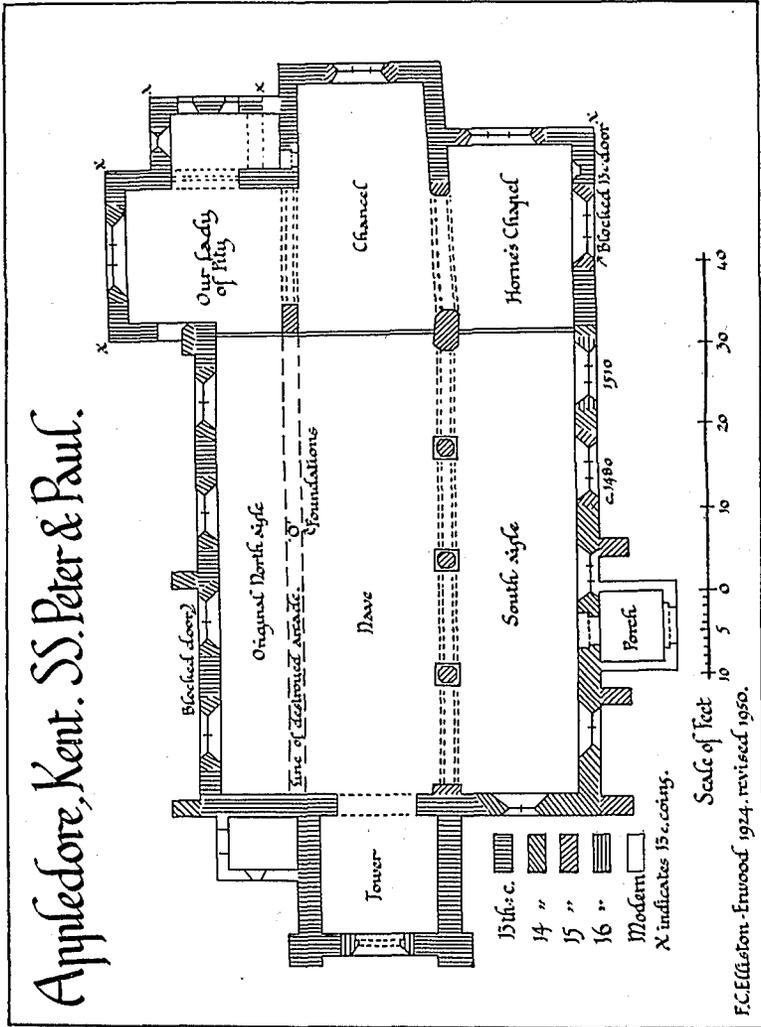


FIG. 1



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2. Its development in the following 13th century is indicated in solid black. Matters to note are :
  - (a) The aisled nave extended to the west by one bay with the addition of a western tower.
  - (b) The extended chancel.
  - (c) The north and south chapels.
  - (d) The clasping buttresses of the tower and the absence of a structural stairway.
  - (e) According to Mr. Bourne, foundations were found at the point marked O, which were parts of the footings of the missing north arcade.
  - (f) The 13th-century coins still remaining at the places marked X.

The peculiar, if not unique, arrangement of the north chapel "Our Lady of Pity" shows a small sanctuary projecting from its east wall. This has now lost its unusual character by being incorporated with the remainder of the church by enclosing the narrow strip of ground that once separated the two chancels. The peculiar splays of its two east windows should be noted. The south chapel, that of the Horne family, is perhaps a little later than the other, but it is still in the main 13th century, though it has many later additions.

In the 14th century there seems to be evidence that the south aisle was widened and some windows inserted and opportunity taken to put a fine screen across the whole church, but this work did not remain unscathed for very long, for in 1380 the church was burnt by an invading French band. Traces of this fire can still be seen in the reddened stones at the west end of the nave ; in fact the fire appears to have been more or less confined to the nave and aisles, for the screen or at least the greater part of it escaped much damage. The north arcade was certainly lost and never rebuilt, for when the church was repaired towards the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century, the north aisle was thrown into the nave and the whole covered by a single span roof. This gives the building an unusual appearance with a nave of 25 ft. width. The existing arcade belongs to the restoration period, but several of the arches appear to be of the original construction. Other alterations were carried out in the same and subsequent centuries, i.e. the modification of the west front of the tower, and several windows (shown on the plan) can be securely dated from information in wills. The screen across the church has already been mentioned. The central section is of later date, replacing maybe that part that was lost in the fire. The cresting is modern throughout. The font with heraldic carvings is early 15th century.

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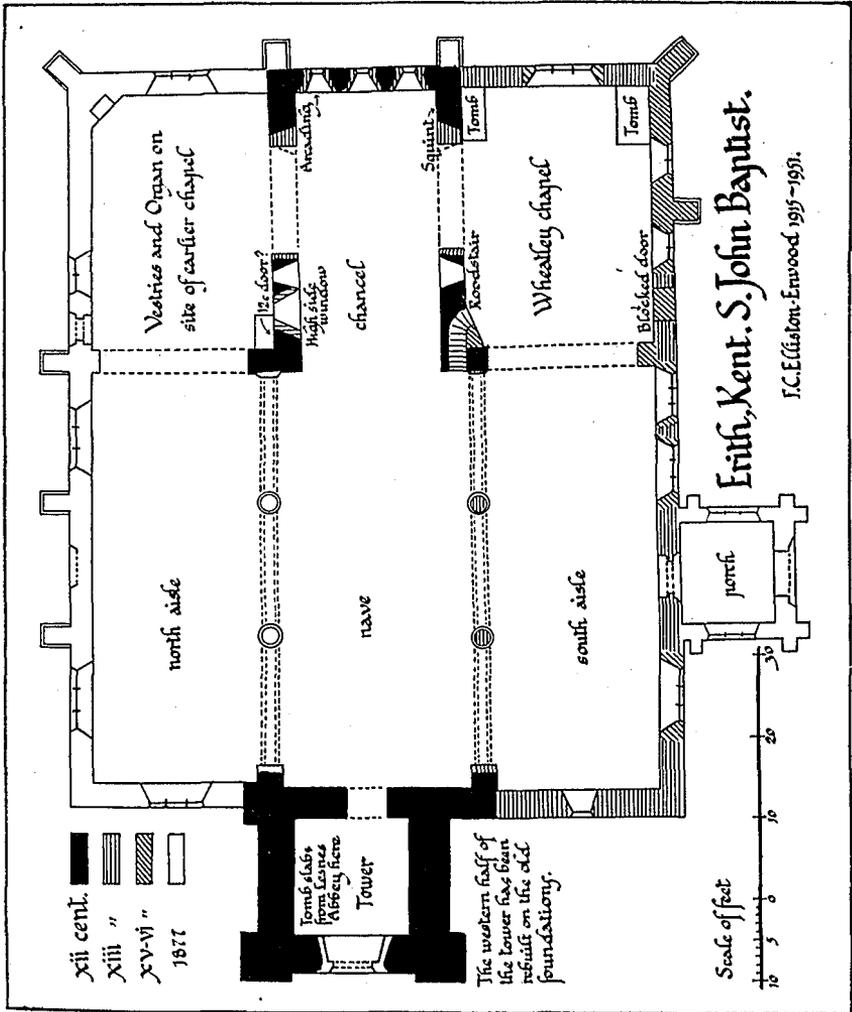
### THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST, ERITH

This church in the past has certainly not lacked its historians, but it still lacks a history, and this is in no small measure due to the drastic treatment that has been meted out to the fabric in its several restorations. Wall plaster has been stripped and the exposed stonework has been pointed with a hard unsympathetic cement, liberally mixed with soot. Not only so, but the workman, possibly exhorted thereto by minds more imaginative than his own, has produced arches and openings by emphasizing certain lines, to produce anchorites' cells and the like, to the utter confusion of later students. Faked antiquities have been constructed from miscellaneous pieces of carved stone and mutilation and destruction has completed the sorry tale. It is no wonder therefore that a coherent story of the church is difficult to obtain, and as such evidence that does remain points to a church that differed in many details from the normal Norman nucleus, the difficulties are not diminished. Possibly in this may be traced the influence of the great church builder, Richard de Lucy, the holder of the manor here in the 12th century, and the builder of Lesnes Abbey in the parish in 1178. This abbey church was never in any way parochial, and this points to the fact that a church already existed in the parish. De Lucy's ideas on church building were perhaps advanced, for another of his churches on the opposite side of the river Thames, at Rainham, Essex, is also of uncommon planning.

Whether de Lucy was responsible or not, it appears that the church built at Erith was a large one with its nave coterminous with that now existing, and a chancel, also preserved in its entirety and twice the usual size. In addition there was a large western tower and it is not beyond probability that an aisle, half the width of the present one, may have been added on the south side.

The evidence for this church is :

- (a) Traces of four Norman windows, two each north and south, can be noted in the chancel walls.
- (b) One of the external nave coins, the south-east, is still to be seen in the north-west corner of the Wheatley chapel. This, of course, implies that any aisle added on this side would not be contemporary with the earliest work, but could have been added later.
- (c) The existence of part of what appears to be a wall arcade of Norman work in the north-east angle of the chancel, coupled with the definite statement of Flaxman Spurrell (*Arch. Cant.*, XVI) that four similar arches were to be seen on the east wall, though no trace seems to exist to-day.
- (d) The same authority mentions a Norman doorway in the north-west angle of the chancel.



Erith, Kent, S. John Baptist.

J.C. Elliston-Enwood, 1935-1939.

PLAN 4

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- (e) The western tower is of massive construction with clasping buttresses and has no constructional staircase. It is not central with the nave, its north wall being on the line of the north wall of the nave, but this feature is often found when it is proposed to add an aisle.
- (f) The numerous worked stones re-used in various parts of the building, many showing Norman ornament.

Taking all this into consideration it would appear that the first church was of a more elaborate character than the usual village church but additions in the next century made the building even more impressive. An aisle was certainly built, though still narrower than that of to-day and the existing nave arcade was put in, but even before this, two chapels were added north and south of the chancel, the transitional arches of which still remain. Of these chapels the south is in use to-day as the Wheatley Chapel, but that to the north had disappeared some time before the restoration of the church in 1877, for the new vestries were built on its site. Its blocked arch is shown on the plate facing p. 154, *Arch. Cant.*, XVI.

But meanwhile another of those unrecorded disasters which are so frequently encountered in studying old churches, had occurred at Erith. Even the most casual examination will show that the west tower has been riven from parapet to foundation and has been rebuilt. When and how this happened is unknown. There is, however, a clue. Above the entrance to the tower, high up on the interior west wall of the nave is a blocked-up opening. Investigating this from the ringing stage of the tower, it proves to be a window and its date may be 14th-15th century. Now it is hardly likely that such a window would be inserted while there was a tower in being. A small "peephole" for observation is understandable, but this is a large opening and can only be for light (the church is incredibly dark). It seems reasonable, then, to suggest that

- (a) The church tower was badly damaged, say about 1450.
- (b) It remained in this state for some time and a window was put in the exposed east wall to give much needed light.
- (c) At some later period, again not known, the tower was rebuilt and the now useless window was filled up.

Finally the church was restored and enlarged in 1877 in the style of the period, but it must be put on record as evidence of the real "gothicness" of the time, that a *blocked doorway* was actually inserted in the north wall, as unintelligent a piece of antiquarianism as it is possible to conceive.

## NOTES ON KENT CHURCHES

One or two matters are worthy of comment. Low-side windows are well known, but here is a *high side* window. It is of the early 16th century, and its outside is shown on the plate above mentioned. But inside the church, this window, high up near the wall plate and still retaining its original ironwork, has its sill splayed downwards for about 4 ft. or more, obviously to shed light on the reader's desk below.

The sundial on the south side of the church has the inscription "The gift of Nicholas Stone, 1643." Is this the Nicholas Stone, Master Mason to His Majesty, who died 24th August, 1647, at the age of 61, and who was buried in the old church of St. Martin in the Fields, London? And if so, what was his connection with Erith? No one seems to know.

It should be mentioned that just recently the church has been colour washed throughout, and the distressing effects of the ugly black lines of pointing have been considerably modified. But nothing can bring back the evidence destroyed when this early restoration took place in 1877.