

century it was £20 a year, then it rose to £25, and gradually towards the close of that century it reached £60, and then £70, and eventually, in 1834 £90; when however, two years after, the Tithe Commutation Act came into operation, the Rent-charge was fixed at £193: showing that not one half the real value of the tithes had ever been paid to the poor Vicar.

### THE CHURCH.

The probable time of the original building of a Church in Detling must remain a matter of conjecture.

No records have been found to help us to any approximate date. A glance at the southern wall clearly tells us that those square-headed windows belong to a much later period than that in which the wall itself was erected; indeed, over the window to the east of the porch may be traced the curves of a pointed arch, while the rough rubble construction of this portion of the south wall as clearly indicates a much earlier date. A Church must have existed in Detling at least as early as the middle of the 13th century,—say, nearly 650 years ago,—for it is recorded in the “Plea Rolls” of the 30th year of Henry III. (A.D. 1252) that one “Juliana, the wife of Ralph de Bubehurst” was charged with complicity in a murder committed in Sussex, and “was taken and imprisoned in the Archbishop’s prison at Maydenestone, and escaped therefrom to the Church of Detlinen.”\* And the south wall still standing must certainly have formed part of that building in which she found sanctuary. The south door, too, itself may have

The Church

Used for  
Sanctuary  
in 1252.

\* Quoted in Farley’s “History of the Weald of Kent,” vol. ii. p. 33.

been the one by which she entered, while the porch with its wider spanned arch was probably added 200 years later.

The solid Tower, with its plain, bold, broader arch and the graceful cusped three-light window above it, probably mark the connection of this little village with its more important neighbour at Maidstone, and Archbishop Courtenay's College there.\* The East window of the chancel being of the earliest Perpendicular style was no doubt inserted soon after.

The Church would seem to have consisted originally of only the nave, the present north isle being evidently a *lean-to* added at a later period; for during the repairs in 1861, the foundations of an old north wall were found along the line of the present arches.

On the north of the Chancel stands what was no doubt originally a Chantry, with its side altar, added on North  
Chancel. for private use by one of the earlier owners of the adjoining Manor of West Court, probably by the Sir William de Detlinge who was the loyal vassal of the princely Archbishop Peckham. In its south wall still remains a small *piscina* or *credence* niche, of probably the later part of the 13th century.†

The present windows are of recent date; the one at the east, being a copy of the well-known beautiful window in the Parish Church of Headcorn, (but with mullions unduly lengthened,) was inserted by the late Mr. J. S. Rugg, as also was the small two-light square-headed window to the north, to harmonise with those already existing to the south of the nave.

\* See p. 16.

† The original stone at the bottom having been replaced by a modern one, it is impossible to say whether it was originally designed for a ledge or a drain.

Of the original character of the windows of this North Chancel there is now no trace ; not a vestige has been retained, not a single quarry of coloured glass which once adorned them or any other window in the Church, has been preserved.\* Amid the surrounding newness, one feels the more thankful that the little niche has not also disappeared.

The arch between this Chantry and the Chancel is a fine specimen of 14th century work, and for many years retained an honourable memento of the old knightly family of Detling, which Phillipott describes as existing even in his time, viz., "a massive Lance, all wreathed about with thinn iron plate, preserved in the Church (like that of William the Conqueror's at Battle, in Sussex) as the very spear by them used and left as a memorial of their achievements in arms, and an emblem also of their extraordinary strength and ability†."

Detling  
Lance.

This token of a family "famous for fortitude and chivalrie" has long since disappeared. Hasted, writing at the close of the last century, says that then not only was there no lance, but "not even a report of its having been there."

The truth of old Phillipott's statement, however, receives an interesting confirmation in the fact that from the east side of the arch there still projects a substantial iron crook, evidently placed for the lance rest, and, in the beam above, the iron staple to receive the lance head.

Hasted, however, says that in his time there was in the Church, the bust of a man on a piece of ancient gravestone

\* Colored glass did once exist in the window of this North Chancel.

† Phillipott's Villare Cantianum, p. 131.

which is reported to have belonged to the monument of Sir John de Detling.\* Some of the old inhabitants now living can remember a helmet and other portions of old armour, very dilapidated and dirty, hanging in the Chancel: but solid bust and frail armour have alike vanished from their place.

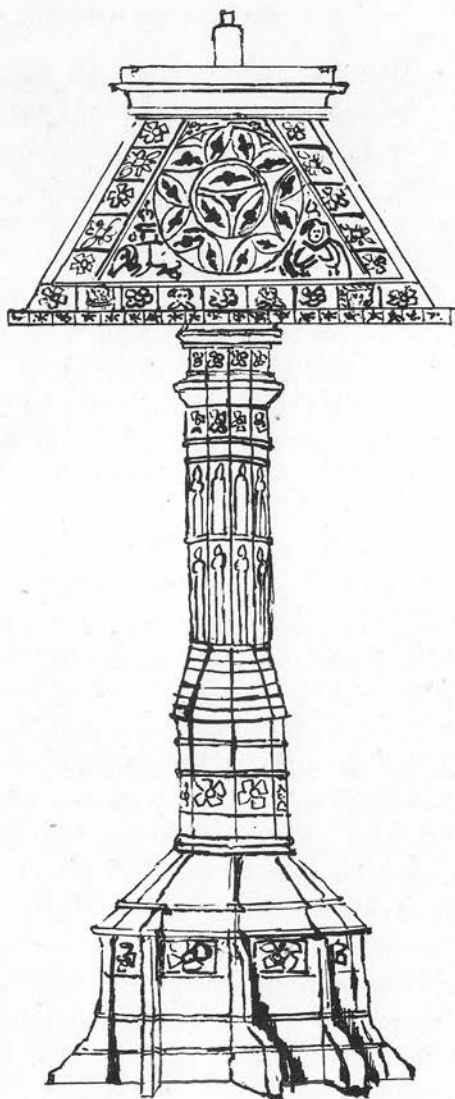
Yet the little Church can still boast another relic of the past, even more valuable than the missing lance or the monumental effigy, an oaken LECTERN, which was deemed by the great antiquarian, Henry Shaw, worthy of description among his "Specimens of Ancient Furniture" as being "a beautiful specimen," "showing the elaborate carving bestowed by our ancestors on what was often covered with books."† Parker also, in his "Glossary of Architecture," (vol. i., p. 285) pronounces it to be "not only more ornamental than any of the other remaining wooden lecterns" but one of the oldest; indeed as a work of the 14th century it may be regarded as unique in the richness and general beauty of the carving.

It has an oblong top with a sloping desk on each side, revolving round an octagonal stem, enriched with cusp headed panels, spreading out into bold angles and deep buttresses at the base.

Its chief beauty is to be found in the carving of the four sloping sides, each of which contains a large circle of rich tracery, those on the broader sides being especially beautiful in character, with the spandrils at the lower angles, filled in, on the one side with the "bear and billet" and a

\* Hasted's Kent, vol. iv. p. 354.

† A very accurate drawing of this Lectern, by William Twopenny, Esq., illustrates Shaw's volume.



The Detling Lectern.  
Cf. 3      Circa 1340.

scorpion, and on the other with an angel transfixing a serpent, and an elephant with a howdah on its back.\* The delicate, chamfered mouldings of the tracery in these central circles would assign it to the reign of Edward III., when the Decorated style was at its height; a date which is also confirmed by the appearance, among the rich diapering, of a female head with the full square head-dress so familiar to us in the portraits of Phillipa of Hainault, his noble queen. These emblems, too, so Asiatic in character, point to a time when, if Crusading ardour had somewhat cooled, the memories of Eastern life and custom would still be fresh in men's minds. All these features point to the middle of the 14th century, (say 1340 or 1350), as the probable date of this Lectern.

Although some regret may arise that it is now worm-eaten and somewhat damaged, and has moreover lost the crowning finial which once adorned it, such regrets are but trifling compared with a sense of thankfulness that the Lectern itself still remains. It was indeed once very nearly lost. A Churchwarden had actually pawned it to make up a small deficiency in the Church-rate; but the late Mr. Rugg's father no sooner heard of the Vandalism than he hastened into Maidstone and redeemed it, and restored it to the Church, as a relic of local and great artistic, as well as antiquarian value; where it is hoped that it may be soon restored also to its original use in public worship.

The pulpit, which is a remarkably good specimen of modern imitation work of the Perpendicular style, originally stood in All Saints' Church, The Pulpit.

\* An exact representation of the conventional "Elephant and Castle."

Maidstone, to which it was presented by the Rev. T. Vallance, when he was carrying out the partial restoration of that noble building in 1846; when, however, some years after, it was to be replaced by a handsome stone pulpit, Mr. Robert Rugg, brother of Mr. J. S. Rugg, purchased it, and presented it to Detling.

Detling Church has also a FONT, which, if it were only properly placed, would call forth some admiration from the antiquarian visitor, and certainly deserves a few words of notice. The absence of any distinctive features of ornamentation renders it difficult to assign to it any approximate date, but its bold, massive octagonal bason, incased with lead, proclaims a venerable age. The four small circular columns which support it are modern, but are believed to be copies of those on which it originally rested. It formerly occupied its right position in front of the entrance door, as a recess still remaining in the pillar shows; but when the Church was re-pewed in 1861, the Font was removed that the space might be utilised, and was thrust away against the wall under the west gallery, where it seems doomed to remain for the present, from the lack of available space elsewhere.

The Church plate comprises four articles; the Flagon, Chalice, and Paten bear the inscription "*Ex Communion Plate. Dono Tho. Bliss Armig*" surmounted by the coat of arms. The hall-mark clearly fixes the date of manufacture at the year 1715, but who this Thomas Bliss was, and his connection with the parish, it seems difficult to discover. It appears that a Thomas Bliss filled the offices of Churchwarden, Mayor, and Chamberlain of Maidstone between the years 1674 and 1684,\* but the

\* Gilbert's Antiquities of Maidstone, pp. 145, 156, 198.



name occurs nowhere in the Detling Register, nor does he seem to have held any land in the parish ; the present of this plate therefore to the Church, if it was really made—for it, like the pulpit, might have come from some other Church—is not to be accounted for. The Alms Dish is of recent date, bearing the inscription “ *Presented to Detling Parish by the Rev. Robert Cobb, Vicar, 1840,*” and was an offering “in Memoriam” of his only child, who had died in the January of that year.

Allusion has been made to the TOWER ; its basement, so solid and well-proportioned, is one of the ornaments of the Church. Its upper storey was until recently composed of weather-boarding, crowned with a dwarfed capping spire of shingle. The liberality of Mr. William Peale, of Loose, in the year 1861, replaced this frail structure with substantial stone-work in place of the weather-boarding, and giving a higher elevation to the capping spire, has adds greatly to the beauty of the Church, as it now rises amid the fine belt of surrounding elms. But unfortunately, while so greatly improved externally, the village has cause to regret the loss of the peal of Bells which its ancestors had for centuries enjoyed. There were formerly four bells ; three of them had become broken or cracked, and were sold to raise a few pounds towards the expenses of repewing the Church in 1861 ; so Detling can no longer evince, in that time-honoured English mode, its sympathy in the passing events of its own denizens, or of the outer world beyond. A few entries. taken from the Vestry Books of the commencement of the last century, will show how demonstrative the men of Detling of that day were :—

The Tower.

The Bells.



1713. May 5. Paid to the ringers at the Peacē,\* 5 shillings.

1713. July 7. Paid to the ringers at the Thanksgiving,\* 5 shillings.

1716. June 13. Paid to the ringers on the Thanksgiving Day,  
5 shillings.†

Such entries as these—and they are of frequent occurrence—cause a pardonable regret that the Detling Church Tower can no longer raise its voice, like its neighbour parishes, on occasions of public or local rejoicing, and must be content with its single bell.

The Chancel was restored, and a light open roof introduced, by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1878.

Mention must now be made of the MONUMENTS.—

Even this little Village Church could once boast its monumental brasses, as two indented tombstones  
Monuments. still remain to show. One of these retains traces of an ornamental brass of the Decorated Period, which must have possessed no ordinary beauty. It now lies in the north-west corner of the Church, placed well out of the way, and probably only preserved at all because it was capable of being utilized as a paving stone,—and here it is placed with the foot to the west! On it may be distinctly

Formerly  
brasses. traced the bed of a brass representing a very richly foliated crocheted cross, five feet high, standing on a deep basement of three steps; the centre of the cross contained a full length figure, probably of a Priest in the act of blessing. Each of the upper corners of the stone contained a small shield, while a narrow inscription ran round all its four sides. Not a particle of the brass, however, remains, though the *matrix* is very distinctly outlined.

\* Consequent on the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht.

† On the defeat of "the Pretender's" friends at Preston.