

CHURCHES IN ROMNEY MARSH.

I. OLD ROMNEY CHURCH.

MISLED by the prefix, in the name of Old Romney, we expect to find in its church of St. Clement traces of the oldest foundation in this district. Upon a close examination, however, nothing is to be seen here of a date earlier than the middle of the twelfth century, if so early, and it becomes evident that the west end of St. Nicholas Church,* at New Romney, is older than any part of this building.

Turning to the history of the place, for an explanation, we find that St. Clement's Church stands within a Hundred called St. Martin's, and this fact at once suggests that there was an older church dedicated to St. Martin. A Saxon charter of A.D. 740-1 proves that such was the case. St. Martin's Church stood in what we call New Romney, where, likewise, there was a third church, dedicated to St. Laurence. Of its foundation we know nothing; but, if we may be guided by the analogy of similar dedications, we should infer that the church of St. Laurence was founded before that of St. Clement. Thus, such light as history throws upon the matter serves to confirm the impression conveyed by the architectural features of Old Romney Church, as at present seen. It leads us to believe that the church of St. Clement, in the little village of Old Romney, was not founded until after the erection of all three of the parish churches of the important town which we call New Romney, but which throughout the middle ages had no prefix to its name, being known simply as Romney.

* The tower of St. Nicholas Church seems to have been first built about the end of the eleventh century. In the following century (*circa* 1160-1200), its height was increased, and its remarkable tower aisles were added, at base.

Thirty years ago, a writer in the *Ecclesiologist*,* who expected to find here some traces of Saxon Architecture, was unwillingly forced to the conclusion that the ground-plan of St. Clement's Church is Romanesque, with Middle-Pointed additions. Not knowing the history of the district, he suggested that the fabric had been rebuilt, about A.D. 1150. Probably the actual date of this edifice may be two or three decades later than that. Mr. Basil Champneys was, like that writer and ourselves, disappointed in finding here no visible traces of early architecture. Observing, in the east wall, some stones of a size smaller than the rest, he puts the despairing query, "Could that small portion be Saxon?"

It seems to be most probable that St. Clement's Church was built by the heiress of the De Romenel family, Aubrey de Romenel, who married William de Jarpenville. She survived both her husband and her son-in-law (Thomas Fitz-Bernard, who married her only child Alice); so that in 1212 her grandson Ralph Fitz-Bernard was acting as her representative. The patronage of this benefice remained with her descendants, during two centuries and a half after that period. As this is one of the few churches in Romney Marsh, of which the advowson remained in lay hands, for several centuries, it becomes interesting to trace its descent, especially as its possessors were families so renowned in history as the Badlesmeres, the De Roos, and the Scropes. Aubrey de Jarpenville survived until 1225-6, when her widowed daughter Alice Fitz-Bernard succeeded to her advowson and manors. We have no records of the rectors' names until February, 1287-8, when Robert Bernard, † a sub-deacon, was presented by the patron, Alice's great-grandson Ralph Fitz Bernard, who again exercised the right of presentation in June, 1289, when he appointed Henry Pancok. ‡ When Ralph Fitz-Bernard died, in 1305-6, his grandson and heir Thomas Fitz-Bernard succeeded, but he left no issue. Consequently this advowson passed to that great, but unfortunate noble Bartholomew de Badlesmere, whose mother was Margaret Fitz-Bernard, sister or aunt of Thomas. The patronage

* Vol. ix., p. 343.

† *Archbishop Peckham's Register*, fol. 37.

‡ *Ibidem*, fol. 40.

of Old Romney was then upon the point of passing out of lay hands; as Lord Badlesmere desired to appropriate it to a Religious House, which he proposed to found at Leveland. His project however was not carried out. During Lord Badlesmere's absence in the north of England, where he was acting with the Barons, who combined for the overthrow of the Despencers, favourites of Edward II, a peculiar appointment was made for Old Romney Church. On the 28th of August, 1321, Archbishop Reynolds authorized John de Chelmuresford to be "commended" to the Rectory, on the presentation of Gilbert de Chelmuresford, clerk.* Within two months from that day, the King was besieging Lord Badlesmere's Castle of Leeds, near Maidstone, which was surrendered to him on the 1st of November, 1321. Lady Badlesmere and her children were sent to the Tower of London, as prisoners; and not long afterwards Lord Badlesmere himself was taken. He was beheaded; his head was fixed over the Burgate at Canterbury, and his estates were forfeited. During this period, John Salerne, of Winchelsea, was instituted to the benefice of Old Romney by Archbishop Reynolds.† After the powerful Lord Badlesmere had been beheaded, in 1322, his young son Giles de Badlesmere was permitted to succeed to this, and other, property of his father, in 1328. He, however, died within ten years, and then his four sisters became his heirs, in 1338. Their names are remarkable, from the fact that the eldest and the youngest bore the same baptismal name. They were Margaret senior, Matilda, Elizabeth, and Margaret junior. So far as we can learn, the two Margarets seem jointly to have shared the right of patronage of St. Clement's, Old Romney.

The younger Margaret de Badlesmere (aged 23 in 1338) married Sir John Tibetot, who presented Thomas de Alston to the benefice in January, 1354-5.‡ In June of the same year William de Stanford became rector.§ Names of succeeding rectors are lacking until William Byggynges was instituted in August, 1409,|| having been presented by Sir

* *Archbishop Reynolds' Register*, folio 28.

† *Archbishop Islip's Register*, folio 268^b.

|| *Archbishop Arundel's Register*, vol. ii., folio 54.

‡ *Ibidem*, 30.

§ *Ibidem*, 269^b.

John Tibetot's granddaughter Margaret. She was then called Lady le Scrope, but her first husband, Sir Roger le Scrope of Bolton, having died in 1403, she was in 1409 the wife of John Mandesere, who united with her in presenting William Byggynges to this benefice. Subsequently, as we shall see, her descendants exercised the right of patronage.

Meanwhile, we must turn to the other sharer of the Advowson. The elder Margaret de Badlesmere married William, third Baron de Roos of Hamlake, who died in 1342-3. Their two sons, William the fourth Baron, and Thomas the fifth Baron, died, one in the Holy Land in 1352, the other in 1383. Through the absence of the former, in Sept. 1352, Sir Guy de Bryen* presented Richard de Honyngton to this rectory. John, the sixth baron, survived Thomas his father only ten years. Consequently, a younger brother, William, seventh Baron de Roos of Hamlake (who died in September, 1414), was patron of this Rectory, when John Carliel, *alias* Barwell, became the Incumbent, in January, 1413-14, by exchange with William Byggynges.† Baron William's mother, Beatrice *née* Stafford, widow of Thomas, fifth Baron de Roos, survived her son, and possessed this advowson when she died, in 1415.‡ Her grandson John, eighth Baron de Roos, was then a minor, but in 1420-1 (9 Henry V), when he died at the early age of twenty-two, he possessed this advowson.§ His brother, Thomas the ninth Baron, died seised of it in 1431, when it was entered upon the Inquisition Schedule, as the Advowson of the Church of *Olde Romene Mershe*.||

Meanwhile, between the dates of the deaths of those two brothers, Thomas Bank had been presented to the Rectory, in August, 1422, by the representative of the other Badlesmere heiress, who at that time was Margaret, widow of Richard le Scrope. Her deceased husband, Richard, had been the son of Margaret Tibetot, by Sir Roger le Scrope of Bolton.

During the troubled times of the Wars of the Roses, the heirs of the Scropes and of De Roos were minors. Conse-

* *Islip's Register*, folio 262.

† *Arunde's Register*, vol. ii., folio 69.

‡ Inq. post mortem, 3 Hen. V, No. 44.

§ Inq. p. m., 9 Hen. V, No. 58.

|| Inq. p. m., 9 Hen. VI, No. 48.

quently, in February, 1433-4, the Archbishop presented, to the Rectory of Old Romney, Richard Raynhall, LL.B.* In like manner, King Henry VI presented Robert Kirkeham, on the resignation of Raynhall, in July, 1441,† “because Thomas, Lord de Roos is a minor, and the King’s ward.” Kirkeham was succeeded by Richard Manning in February, 1443-4.‡ The young De Roos, Thomas, tenth Baron, was attainted in November, 1461, so that his family lost their possession, or share, of the Old Romney advowson.

In the following year, however, the other joint owner exercised the right of patronage here. On the 19th of June, 1462, William Bolton was instituted to the Rectory, upon the presentation of Sir John le Scrope of Bolton.§ He was the son of Henry le Scrope, and grandson of Richard le Scrope, and thus great-grandson of Margaret Tibetot by her first husband Sir Roger le Scrope. Margaret Tibetot was granddaughter of the younger Margaret de Badlesmere. Thenceforward, the Advowson was usurped by King Edward IV and his successors down to Henry VIII, who transferred it to Archbishop Cranmer in exchange for some other property.|| In 1511, the rector, Richard Shurley, being non-

* *Chichele’s Register*, folio 202.

† *Ibidem*, folio 230.

‡ *Stafford’s Register*, folio 76.

§ *Bourghier’s Register*, folio 84.

|| The Rectors who succeeded William Bolton, who resigned, were:—

1463, May	15, John Frye, <i>vice</i> Bolton resigned (<i>Bourghier</i> , 87).
1465, Nov.	11, W ^m Newhouse, <i>vice</i> Frye deceased (<i>Ibid.</i> , 91 ^b). John Davyson.
1482, June	14, John Bonde, <i>vice</i> Davyson resigned (<i>Ibid.</i> , 130).
1506, Oct.	25, Richard Shurley, <i>vice</i> Bonde, dec ^d (<i>Warham</i> , 329).
1517, Feb.	9, Richard Bull, <i>vice</i> Shurley, res ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 364 ^b).
1520, Oct.	13, Will ^m Watson, <i>vice</i> Bull, dec ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 370).
1523, Feb.	10, Ric ^d Robynson, <i>vice</i> Watson, res ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 380).
1527, July	31, Edward Sponere, <i>vice</i> Robynson, res ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 393 ^b). Patrons for this turn Rev. Ant. Fysshier and Tho ^s Porrege.
1549, Jan ^r	6, Christ. Courthope, <i>vice</i> Sponer, dec ^d (<i>Cranmer</i> , 407). C. C. renounced all allegiance to Rome, and also the composition made with John Colynve, rector of Mydley, by E. Sponer.
1557, July	21, Robert Hill, S.T.B., <i>vice</i> Courthope, dec ^d (<i>Pole</i> , 73).
1559, Jan ^r	13, John Steward, <i>vice</i> Hill, deprived (<i>Parker</i> , 340 ^b).
1565, Oct.	26, Tho ^s Palley, B.A., <i>vice</i> Steward, dec ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 375).
1565, Dec.	22, Will ^m Lotte, <i>vice</i> Palley, dec ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 375).
1567, Jan.	15, Kenelm Dygbye, <i>vice</i> Lott, dec ^d (<i>Ibid.</i> , 384).

Hasted gives the following names,

1603, June	17, Benjamin Carrier, S.T.P., <i>vice</i> Digby, dec ^d (<i>Hasted</i> , viii. 445).
1614, July	10, James Cleland, <i>vice</i> Carrier, deprived.

resident, a chaplain named Thomas Penyston leased and farmed the Rectory. He was then ordered to repair the chancel of the church, and the parsonage buildings.

Yet a little longer may we linger outside the fabric of the church. Approaching it from the village street, which occupies the actual site of the mediæval waterway to New Romney, called the Rhee, which flowed where cottages now stand, we first reach the south-west corner of the building. At this corner stands the small low square tower, with short shingled spire, containing three bells. Remarkably small is the interior area of its base ($10\frac{1}{2}$ feet by $8\frac{1}{2}$); seldom do we find a tower of such narrow proportions. The church has north and south aisles, both to its nave and to its chancel—notwithstanding the smallness of its tower. The chancel and its aisles are conterminous; but the nave aisles are, each of them, shorter by one bay than the nave. Yet the tower, standing at the west-end of the south aisle, fills up the vacant corner there, so that its west wall is flush with that of the nave.

Looking up at this west wall of the tower we observe, across its entire width, about fifteen feet from the ground, a curved (not pointed) arch, which looks like a relieving arch. What was its purpose, and what are its materials, we will not presume to decide. There is no corresponding window, nor doorway, immediately beneath it; the small west doorway of the tower, so very rudely opened many feet below, may in fact have been a later insertion, not an original entrance. Some observers declare that this arch is turned with Roman tiles. The tower is clearly an erection of late date in the twelfth century. Its south-eastern buttress, however, was probably added in the fourteenth century. It is diagonally

- 1627, Jan^y 25, John Jeffray, *vice* Cleland, dec^d.
 1627, March 17, Robert Say, *vice* Jeffray, res^d.
 1628, April 17, John Gee, *vice* Say, dec^d.
 Meric Casaubon, *vice* Gee.
 1634, Dec. 5, John Swinnoek, *vice* Casaubon, res^d.
 1670, April 6, William Watson.
 1690, August 6, John Defray, *vice* Watson, dec^d.
 1739, Feb. 21, John Peters, *vice* Defray, dec^d.
 1763, August 3, John Fowell, *vice* Peters, dec^d.
 1763, Dec. 14, Tho^s Freeman, *vice* Fowell, res^d.
 1788, Feb. Joshua Dix, *vice* Freeman, res^d.

placed, and its projection has completely blocked the south doorway of the church, thus demonstrating its late insertion. The arches by which the interior of the tower opens to the nave and to the south aisle of the church, are very rude examples of small early pointed arches. The wooden ladder-stair, by which the bells are reached, is extremely rude and primitive. Formed of blocks, simply sawn diagonally in half, it is of early date.

Passing outside the west end of the church, we see that the nave's west window is of two lights, of the Decorated period. The west wall of the north aisle seems to have had a small window of Transition style, its head being rather curved than pointed. Turning to the right we come to the north porch, which, as the principal entrance of the church, is a very noteworthy feature. Probably it, and the doorway by which we enter the church, were erected in the fourteenth century, when very much was done to improve this church.

That the chief entrance should be on the north, and sheltered by a porch, is extremely unusual. The churches of Old Romney, Ruckinge, Warehorne, and Brookland, are alike in this unusual feature. Other examples are to be found in Kent at Rainham, Leysdown, Harty, Margate St. John's, Cobham, Shorne, Hollingbourne, Hernehill, Huckling, Canterbury St. Dunstan, All Saints, St. Alphage, and St. Mildred; at Paddlesworth, St. Margaret at Cliff, and Elham.

The usual and favoured side for general entrance is so universally the sunny south, that these exceptional instances are worthy of notice. In country churches, of more elaborate architecture than common, we sometimes find porches both on the north and on the south side, as at Eastchurch in Sheppey (where there is also a third porch at the west end), at Elham, Stockbury, and at Upchurch.

The effect of this universal custom, of entering the church on the south side, has had a remarkable effect upon churchyards. Mourners have ever loved to lay their dead as near as possible to the paths most frequented by the living. The Pagan Romans always buried their friends beside a

public highway. Christians have ever chosen for interment those spots which lie nearest to the most frequented paths in the churchyard. Consequently, the almost universal custom of entrance, by a south door, has caused all our old graveyards to be filled upon the south side, before graves are dug upon the north. To that deserted side of the churchyard, therefore, it has ever been usual to bring such bodies as must be interred without the Burial Service of the Church. Outcasts and criminals were laid in the deserted portion, and that portion generally happens to be on the north. Hence has arisen a supposition, that the sunny south side was more blessed than the north. Even in poetry allusion is made to this idea.

“The rich and the poor, all together,
 On the south of the church were sown ;
 To be raised in the same incorruption,
 When the trumpet at last is blown.

“On the north of the church were buried
 The dead of a hapless fame ;
 A cross and a wail for pity,
 But never a date or name.”*

That this relegation of the north side to the criminal and outcast, was purely accidental and conventional, is proved by the recurrence of such cases as those I have mentioned above, where the general entrance is on the north side, and of other cases, such as that of Orpington Churchyard, where the graves were dug more upon the north, than upon the south of the church. We thus are led to see that the influence which filled one side of a churchyard, before another, was neither sunshine, nor superstitious feelings ; but it was the frequent presence of the living, which dominated the choice of resting places for the dead.

Entering by the north porch, we see that the nave opens to the north aisle by one, and to the south aisle by two, very clumsy early-pointed arches, on plain imposts. There are not any shafts, nor any piers save the actual walls of the

* *Christian Ballads*, by Coxe.

nave. On the south side the tower arch gives to the nave the semblance of a third bay.

The font, standing beneath the arch which looks like the middle bay of the south arcade, is a very remarkable example of the Decorated period, with some unique features. It has been pronounced to be the finest* font in this district. The bowl is plain and square; it stands upon an octagonal central stem, and on four round angle shafts. The bases of these shafts are moulded, and the capitals are carved in a very remarkable manner. On the north-western capital is a human figure, well modelled, which seems, with upheld hands, to support the abacus. On the other capitals are human heads, or torsoes, together with foliage. These are probably unique as capitals of font shafts.

In the centre of the nave floor is a small brass, of the time of Henry VIII, bearing effigies of John Ips, and his wife.†

The family of Eps was of old standing in the district. Alan Eps of Brenzet made his will in 1471. William Eps held some land beside St. John's barn in New Romney in 1557; and in the first four Parliaments of Elizabeth's reign William Epses sat as member for New Romney. Later in the same reign, Thomas Epps held land in New Romney.

The chancel arch is entirely enclosed with panelling, so that we cannot see it. Between each aisle of the nave and the corresponding aisle of the chancel there is a pointed arch, but both of them are blocked with wood work. From the south aisle, there is a door through a Perpendicular screen (now boarded up) into the south chancel. Entering it, we see a very good reticulated window, of three lights, in the eastern wall, and small remains of a well carved wooden screen in the north arch (now boarded over) which formerly opened into the chancel. This screen, like the east window, is of the Decorated style, and its upper panels had arched tracery delicately carved, with round shafts; but very little remains. The arch which opened into the chancel seems

* *The Builder*, vol. xxxvii., p. 885.

† Inscribed "Pray for the soules of John Ips and Margaret his wife on whois Almighty ihu haue mercy Amen."

likewise to have been of the Decorated period. Its pier caps are somewhat mutilated, but they were originally well, though simply, moulded. This south chapel, now devoted to lumber, seems to have been dedicated to Saint Katherine. Connected with this church there was in 1463 a Fraternity or Guild of St. Katherine, to which John Yve, of old Romney, left a small bequest, by his will, dated in that year.

The east window of the high chancel is of two lights only, and was probably inserted in the fourteenth century. The whole of the chancel walls are panelled, and the panels are plainly painted.

Entering the north chancel, which is now used as a vestry, we pass beneath an arch similar to that (now panelled over) which faced it on the south. The western arch of this north chancel is blocked up, but there is visible in the substance which blocks it, a doorway and part of a stair which seems to have led to a rood-loft. It is however a very curious example. The east window of this chantry or chancel is of three lights, of the Perpendicular period and late. Probably it was inserted soon after the year 1511, when complaint was made, at Archbishop Warham's visitation, respecting the lack of a new window, for which a legacy had been bequeathed by William Brockhill, to be inserted above "Our Lady's" altar at the east end of the church. The testator's sons, John and William Brockhill, appeared and stated that they were quite ready to pay the bequest, as soon as they saw that the window was commenced. A Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin held periodical services, and maintained a light before an image of the Virgin, within this chancel or chapel of Our Lady, in old Romney Church. To the funds of that Fraternity Hamo Alayn, of Lydd, left two sheep, by his will dated in 1430.

Within this vestry we may see the Registers, commencing in 1538, and a cover for the Communion Table, embroidered with woolwork and adorned with flowers formed of cut velvet. The Communion plate has been examined by Mr. Wilfrid Cripps. He informs me that the silver Communion cup, of date 1693-4, has a paten-cover; it is fluted diagonally, and ornamented with punched patterns at the headings

of the flutes. The name of the parish is engraved in large Italic hand on the handle of the cover or paten. Made in London, it bears the initials of the maker T.K., who also made the alms plate at Lydd Church, in 1680-1.

In the floor of the north chancel is a very remarkable crossed coffin slab. It does not stand upon a calvary or stepped base, but projecting from each side of the cross's stem are diagonal lines, which some have supposed to represent huge thorns. It is figured on the annexed plate, from a drawing made by the Rev. E. M. Muriel.

II. ST. DUNSTAN'S, SNARGATE.

The origin of the name, Snargate, may be traced to the snare-gates, or sluice-gates erected here, which seem to have been absolutely essential to the maintenance of a waterway to the harbour at Romney. The Jurats of Romney paid £16 10s. 9d. for making new gates here, at so late a period as A.D. 1401. The name, Snargate, is by no means unique; in Dover, and in other port-towns, there is near the harbour a Snargate Street.

In June, 1254, Royal Letters Patent issued on behalf of Romney Harbour directed that here a sluice-gate should be newly made. Such sluice-gates had undoubtedly been made here previously. During the same year (1254) "Snergate" is mentioned in the list of knights' fees in Kent. Gervase Alard then held, of the archbishop, one quarter of a knight's fee here.* In 1347, Dionisia Alard paid "Aid" for one eighth of a fee here which Martin Payne had held.† Hasted says that in 1369 Agnes Alard, widow, died possessed of this property.‡ He mentions no other possessor of the manor from that time until the reign of Edward IV, when it was the property of the Fanes of Tunbridge.

During the life of Gervase Alard, probably, the church

* *Archæologia Cantiana*, XII, 211.

† *Ibidem*, X, 128.

‡ *History of Kent*, viii., 376.