

THE RUINED CHAPEL OF ST. KATHERINE AT SHORNE, KENT.

BY GEORGE M. ARNOLD, F.S.A.

IN February 1890 an advertisement in the Kentish newspapers announced the sale by auction of a freehold property at Shorne in Kent. It stated that "adjoining and in the rear is an ancient chapel supposed to have been formerly occupied by Monks, and visited by pilgrims on their way to the Shrine of Thomas à Becket. . . . The spot is rich in antiquarian interest, and the chapel is well known to Archaeologists."

I instructed an agent to attend the sale and to purchase the property with the view of preserving this little mediæval structure which had been used as a cowshed and stable.

The first question arising as to the Shorne chapel, is whether it was a "libera capella," authorized by the Ordinary for the use of the lord and tenants of some local manor; or whether it was a cell or direct dependency upon the Priory of St. Saviour's, Bermondsey, in whom the church of Shorne, and the great tithes, and advowson of the vicarage were vested; or whether it was a chantry chapel founded for the saying of masses for some particular benefactor and his family, living or dead.

In the first place (and this is an argument against its being a *libera Capella*) it does not appear to have had such a separate existence as to have paid tenths or first fruits, nor does it seem to have made the Chrism offering to the Bishop of the diocese yearly at Easter, and indeed the only indication I could for some time find of there being a separate priest besides the vicar in the parish of Shorne, arose from the circumstance that "Nicholas, chaplain of Shorne," is mentioned as one of the witnesses to a charter confirming the appropriation of the churches of Cobham and of Shorne (by Walter, Bishop of Rochester), to the monks of St. Saviour's, Bermondsey. The Instrument of Appropriation, which is given in the *Registrum Roffense*, p. 229, is attested as follows: "Hii testibus Werico abbate de Feversham Ecclesie, Gervasio Decano Roffen., Roberto Capellano nostro, *Nicholao Capellano de Sornes*, et aliis."

The circumstance that neither in the *Registrum Roffense*, nor in any other Episcopal register, ought to be found as to the institution of any Clerk in Holy Orders to this chapel, is singular, and there is a complete absence of any record of its consecration. It

would scarcely have been a Chapel of Ease under the control of the Vicar, having regard to the probable population of Shorne, since it is within a quarter of a mile of the Parish Church, and upon a direct road, but if it were, we should still have expected some evidence of its consecration, or of a licence for the celebration of the Divine Offices and Sacraments, with a more or less strict reservation of the rights of the mother church.

In 1497, the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Gravesend built such a chapel of ease. They had largely migrated to the north end of their parish, nearer to the Thames, and complained of the distance of their parish church. So the Vicar-General of Richard, Bishop of Rochester, licensed for Mass and the other divine offices their new "*basilica sive oratorium*," provided it did not prejudice the parish church.

Afterwards, in 1510, Cardinal Fisher consecrated it, first protesting that the consecration was "not to be in prejudice of the parish church, or as authorizing the burial of the dead, or the baptism of infants, nor the ministration of any other holy rite in such chapel except the consecration of the Lord's Body."

It is also worthy of note that Hasted, in his great work, wholly overlooks this little chapel at Shorne, an omission which is noticed and commented upon by Thorpe, who, in his *Custumale Roffense*, p. 247, writes as follows:—

"On the right hand of the road leading up to Shorne Street, and opposite Mr. Maplesden's house, stands an antient and fair chapel, or oratory; which, with some additional building, is now used as a Malt house, and a small tenement erected against the east end of it inhabited by the Maltman. I was informed by an antient and creditable person there, that in digging the foundation of the new building, or lean to, a stone coffin and many human bones were disturbed. On the north side is a small orchard which probably was the cemetery to it. This edifice has not been mentioned by any writer, nor have I been able hitherto to meet with anything relative to its foundation and endowment. It is likely to have been raised by some of the eminent proprietors of the manors of Shorne and Roundall, but this is merely conjectural. The measurement is as follows: Gable end, to the west, twenty-three feet six inches. North side, forty-three feet eight inches. The drawing was taken A° 1774, and exhibits the north-west view of it. See Plate XX., fig. 3."

Upon my architect's examination of the building, he detected certain indications of want of unity of date in the style of the walls (flint and stone work), and upon digging in consequence about one-third of the whole length from the east end, the base of a buttress was uncovered on the north side, and the same result attended a like excavation on the south, at a similar distance from the east end. He gathered from this that the original erection ended there, which gave an interior length of 18 feet by a width of 17 feet. This would suffice for a mere chantry, but at the end of another third of the length of the little edifice, in its present extension, the base of another buttress was uncovered on the north side,

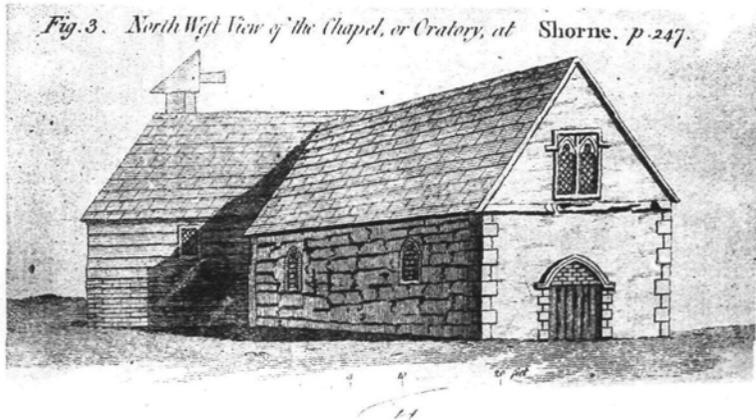


Fig. 2

C. F. KELL PHOTO PROCESS & FURNIVAL ST HOLBORN E.C.



Fig. 1

RUINS OF THE CHAPEL OF ST. KATHERINE. AT SHORNE.
1, WESTERN DOOR—ARCH AND WINDOW 2, SEDILIA AND PIS-CINA 3, EXTERIOR IN 1774.

without any corresponding foundation appearing on the south side; and finally, at the north and south angles of the west end, the bases of two large buttresses were exhumed, as was the case at the like angles of the east end.

It is therefore possible that, after its first erection, the building was elongated upon two successive occasions, and as this could but have been for the purpose of affording increased accommodation for worshippers, it rather suggests the later use of the chapel as a place of worship, in the sense of a chapel of ease.

The style of the eastern part of the building, where the east window has retained its old sill and jambs up to the springing, with the starting of two vertical mullions worked in the stone sill, is Decorated or Second Pointed, the window being like those at the east ends of Northfleet, Southfleet, and Dartford churches, and in the pair of side windows of one light each, next to the chancel, each head is ogeed, the other and westerly openings of the same size terminated with simple Gothic cusps.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the interior is the sedilia, of two seats, under one ogeed Decorated arch, with an adjacent piscina to the east. In the north wall, close to the east end, is a small aumbry.

It is clear from the appearance of the remains that the chapel had been purposely destroyed, and the eastern (the only mullioned) window defaced. Its fragments were built up mixed with red Jacobean bricks. The wall-plates were at the same time removed, and the walls raised by a few courses in order that the building should thenceforth consist of two storeys. For the upper floor and its supports, the timber work of the old roof was freely laid under contribution, and cut as required.

My architect, F. A. Walters, Esq., F.S.A., of 4 Great Queen Street, Westminster, S.W., reported as follows: "The chapel is 52 feet 4 inches long by 17 feet 2 inches wide, the side walls being about 12 feet high from the floor. The walls are 2 feet 10 inches thick, and are built of flint and chalk, with window-quoins and other dressings of Kentish rag-stone. The eastern half of the building is the oldest, and is a good (although simple) example of late 'Decorated' work dating from about 1330. The double sedilia, the piscina, and the aumbry remain in a fairly perfect state, but all traces of the altar, the steps, and floor have been removed. The east window of three lights has also been destroyed, save the cill and jambs, which remain in position, while the four single light side windows remain in fair preservation. The western portion of the building is later and of inferior work in every respect, it dates probably from about 1450 or later."

Opposite to the chapel, is situate a mansion house called "Pipe's Place," referred to by Thorpe as Mr. Maplesden's house, for many years the residence of the Maplesden family. It may, in some earlier condition, have belonged to William Pepyr, and the name of Pepyr's Place may have been converted into Piper's Place, and ultimately Pipe's Place. William Pepyr was a Vicar of Shorne, who died

31st January 1468, and lies buried in the parish church under the following inscription:—"Hic jacet Dominus Willelmus Pepy quondam Vicarius hujus ecclesie qui obiit A.D. 1468 ultimo die Januarii. Cujus anime propicietur Deus. Amen."

In connection with this Vicar it may be mentioned that amongst the Wills proved in the Archidiaconal Court of Rochester (Liber IV., 1471-73, fo. 50, C. J.) occurs the following:—Shorne, 27 January 1470. "Willelmus Peper vicarius perpetuus ecclie parochialis de Shorne . . . Item lego successoribus meis Vicarijs messuagium meum in quo inhabito sic quod non vexent executores meos in reparacione vicarie." Thus, although Vicar, he apparently was not resident in the Vicarage-house, and might have occupied, or even built, Peper's Place (or Pipe's Place, if the latter could be fairly regarded as a corruption of the former designation), of which the present edifice is a later transformation.

I was reluctant to rest content with this imperfect account of the chapel, and other searches having failed I consulted Mr. Wm. Boyd, who shortly referred me to a Commission as to concealed lands in the Counties of Kent and Sussex, dated April 28, 1581, of which the following is a translated copy, and subjoined to it I insert the Certificate returned by the Commissioners.

No. 1.

"Elizabeth by the Grace of God of England France and Ireland Queen Defender of the Faith &c to our very dear and faithful Sir Roland Clerke, Knight, Sir Thomas Shirley, Knight, George Harte, Esquire, Henry Mervyn, Esquire, Henry Palmer, Esquire, Anthony Lewkenour, Esquire, Samuel Hales, Esquire, and Michael Cobb, Esquire, greeting. Know ye that we, putting very great confidence in your fidelities and provident circumspections to act in our affairs, have assigned you eight, seven, six, five, four or three of you to examine inquire and investigate as well by the examinations, relations, testimonies or depositions of whatsoever trust-worthy men, of our Counties of Kent and Sussex, or by all other ways, means or manners by which you shall the better know or shall be able, or seven, six, five, four or three of you shall the better know or shall be able concerning all and singular the lordships, manors, messuages, lands, tenements, rents, rectories, tithes and other possessions and hereditaments and emoluments whatsoever, in our aforesaid Counties of Kent and Sussex, which came or ought to come to our hands or to the hands of any of our late progenitors as well by reason of the dissolution, suppression, resignation, surrender, or forfeiture, of any late monasteries, abbeys, priories, colleges, chantries, free chapels, fraternities, guilds or such other like kinds of things, as by escheat or coming by reason of escheat in any manner whatsoever and by the Statute made and provided that lands and tenements are not to be put to Mortmain, and by reason of the attainder of any person or of any persons for high treasons felonies or murders, and being concealed withdrawn and unjustly withheld from us and our aforesaid progenitors, in any way soever, in the Counties aforesaid, by whom, when, how, and for how long, and who received and had the issues and profits of the premises in the meantime issuing, and as yet receive and have them, by what title, right or warrant, and how much they are worth by the year in all issues beyond reprises, also touching other articles and circumstances more fully concerning the truth of the premises in any way soever. And therefore we command you eight, seven, six, five, four or three of you, that you do not omit on account of any liberty, but that you enter into it, or three of you enter into it, and, at a day and place, or days and places, which you shall have provided for this, or three of you shall have provided for this, and you shall diligently inquire in

respect of and concerning the premises with their circumstances, and you shall do and execute those things, or three of you shall do or execute them, with effect. So that the certificates, examinations, testimonies or depositions touching the premises distinctly and openly taken and had before you (or three) of you, do you have, or three of you have, before the Barons of our Exchequer at Westminster, as quickly as you shall be able, and at the latest in three weeks from the day of Holy Trinity next to come, under your seals or the seals of three of you, and sealed with the seals of those by whom the premises shall have been made, remitting then and there this Commission. And also for the better execution we give and commit full power and authority to you eight, seven, six, five, four, or three of you, to summon and procure to appear before you, eight, seven, six, five, four or three of you, at such time and [place] by you or three of you to be assigned, whatsoever persons whom you shall deem especially fitting for the testifying of the truth in the premises according to your wise discretions. And in respect of and concerning the premises, the Holy Evangelists being first touched by them before you or three of you, to examine and inquire, and the examinations, testimonies, and relations, and your enquiries and notices or those of three of you, are to be set down on parchment, together with your Certificate or that of three of you thereupon taken, and to be written and verified with your hands, or (the hands) of three of you. Witness Sir Roger Manwood, Knight, at Westminster, on the 28th day of April, in the 23rd year of our reign [A.D. 1581].

“By the Roll of the Memoranda of this Easter Roll of Commissions and Letters Patent.

“And by the Barons.

“THO. FANSHAWE.”

No. 2.

“The certificate of Sir Roland Clerke, Knight, Michael Cobb, Esquire, and Samuel Hales, Esquire, Commissioners of the most Illustrious Lady Elizabeth by the Grace of God of England France and Ireland Queen defender of the faith &c by virtue of a Commission of the said Lady the Queen to them amongst others directed and annexed to this certificate made on the 19th day of May in the 23rd year of the same Lady the Queen (A.D. 1581).”

“We Certify to the Barons of the Exchequer of the said Lady the Queen by virtue of the Commission aforesaid and according to the tenor force form and effect of the same.

“That one parcel of land with the appurtenances commonly called Pandolfe’s Grove, containing half an acre lying or being in the parish of Harbaldowne in the County of Kent now or late in the tenure of John Monger, formerly given, granted or appointed for the maintenance of an obit or anniversary or such other kind of superstitious use for ever, is worth clear by the year in all issues beyond reprises, 2^d.”

“We Certify also that the *Chapel of S^t Katherine* with a small croft or garden to the same adjacent containing half an acre lying or being within the *parish of Shorne* in the County aforesaid, is worth clear by the year in all issues beyond reprises, 2^d.”

“And that all and singular the premises came and of right ought to come to the Crown of this kingdom of England by reason of an Act of Parliament made and provided in the 27th year of the reign of the late King Henry the eighth, for the dissolution of monasteries, priories or such other kind of religious houses, or by force of a certain Act of Parliament made and provided in the 31st year of the said late king, for the dissolution of abbeys, monasteries, priories, or such kind of religious houses, or by reason and pretext of a certain Statute made and provided for the dissolution of colleges, chantries, free chapels, guilds, and such like kinds of (places), in the 1st year of the reign of the late King Edward the sixth, or in any other lawful manner whatsoever, and are, nevertheless, as yet concealed,

withdrawn and unjustly withheld, as we have learnt by the relation of divers trustworthy (men) and is given to us the aforesaid Commissioners to be understood and informed, from the Crown aforesaid.

“In witness whereof we the aforesaid Commissioners have set our Seals to this our present Certificate.

“Dated the day and year above written.

(Signed)

“RD. CLERKE.
MYCHAELL COBBE.
SAMUEL HALES.”

Doubtless in most of such cases the information was largely collected and secured beforehand, since, while the Commission is stated and proved to have been delivered to the Commissioners on the 28th of April 1581, the Certificate bears date but three weeks later.

From this Certificate and especially from the low estimate of value that it records, it is clear that the chapel and land in Shorne were laid waste, the former probably being roofless, and it affords ground for the further conjecture that there had been no material endowment either of land or tithes annexed to it which might otherwise have led to its earlier discovery, seizure, and alienation.

The Certificate is also valuable in that it reveals to us for the first time the dedication of the building, in honour of St. Katherine, a very interesting fact.

Within six months from the date of the Certificate, followed the final alienation of the suppressed chantry, as evidenced by the Letters Patent, dated 2 November, 23 Elizabeth, A.D. 1581, of which the following are translated extracts:—

“THE QUEEN, to all to whom &c greeting, Know ye that we, as well in consideration of the good and faithful service upon us bestowed before this time by our late very dear and faithful servant Peter Grey, deceased, as for other good causes and considerations at present specially moving us, of our special grace and of our certain knowledge and mere motion, have given and granted and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors do give and grant to our very dear subjects Edmund Haselwood, of Lyneham in the County of Oxford, gentleman, and Edward Thomlynson, of Hindon in our County of Wilts, gentleman, their heirs and assigns for ever, all those our two messuages or tenements, with the appurtenances, situate lying or being in Fryday Strete in the parish of S^t Mathew within our City of London, now or late in the tenure or occupation of certain William Mownslowe and Cox formerly given bequeathed or appointed for the maintenance of an obit or anniversary or for the sustentation of a priest or chaplain to celebrate masses or at that time other divine services for ever” . . . and, after describing the land called Pandolfe’s Grove at Harbledown amidst other Kentish lands, proceeds:—

“And also All that our *chapel of S^t Katherine* with a small croft or garden to the same adjacent containing half an acre lying or being within the parish of Shorne in the county aforesaid . . . Which said premises came or ought to come to the Crown of this our Kingdom of England by force of a certain Statute made and provided for the dissolution of chantries and other similar [places] in the Parliament in the first year of our late dearest brother Edward the sixth late King of England.

“We give also and for us our heirs and successors for the consideration aforesaid by these presents do grant to the aforesaid Edmund Haselwood and Edward Thomlynson their heirs and assigns all and all kinds of woods underwoods and other trees whatsoever of in and upon all and singular the premises above by these

presents before granted and growing and being of in and upon every or any parcel of the same. And the whole land ground and soil of the same woods underwoods and trees. Also all and every kind of courts leet, views of frankpledge, liberties, privileges and all things which pertain or in future ought to belong to courts leet and views of frankpledge belonging or pertaining to the premises before granted and of every parcel thereof and our reversion and reversions, remainder and remainders whatsoever of all and singular the premises above specified and by these presents before granted and of every parcel thereof. Also the rents, services, revenues, conditions, agreements, forfeitures, commodities, emoluments, and annual profits whatsoever, reserved upon whatsoever leases or grants in any manner made touching the premises before granted or touching any parcel thereof. And all and singular the premises with all their appurtenances as fully freely and entirely and in as ample manner and form as any abbot, abbess, prior, prioress, priest, warden, chaplain, chantry priest, incumbent, master, brother, governor or feoffor, or any abbots, abbesses, priors, prioresses, wardens, chaplains, chantry-priests, incumbents, masters, brothers, governors or feoffors, of the guild, hospital, lights, lamps, obits, anniversaries, and such like kind of things aforesaid, or any other or any others before this having possessing or being thereof seized, had, held or enjoyed the premises before granted, or any parcel thereof, or ought to have, hold, and enjoy, the same premises or any parcel thereof. And as fully freely and entirely and in as ample manner and form as those all and singular the premises before granted and every parcel thereof or parcels thereof or rents or other profits of the same or of any parcel thereof came or ought to come to our hands or to the hands of our dearest father Henry the eighth or of our brother Edward the sixth, late Kings of England, or to the hands of our dearest sister Mary, late Queen of England, or to hands of any others our progenitors by reason or pretext of any suppression dissolution forfeiture or surrender of the aforesaid abbeys, hospitals, chantries, chapels, gilds, fraternities, lights, obits, anniversaries, or such like kinds of things aforesaid, or by reason or pretext of any Act of Parliament or by escheat or escheats exchange or exchanges or by the attainder or attainders of any person or any persons, or by whatsoever other lawful manner right or title or now are or ought to be in our hands.

"All and singular which said premises, with the appurtenances and every parcel thereof were up to this time, or until the 12th day of February in the eighteenth year of our reign concealed withdrawn or unjustly withheld from us or from our said father brother or sister or of which the rents farms and profits of the same now or before the said 12th day of February are or were not answered for and paid to us.

"To have, hold and enjoy all the aforesaid chapels rectories tithes messuages lauds tenements meadows feedings, pastures, woods underwoods hereditaments and other all and singular the premises above expressed and specified and by these presents before granted with all and singular their appurtenances to the aforesaid Edmund Haselwood and Edward Thomlynson their heirs and assigns to the only use and behoof of the said Edmund Haselwood and Edward Thomlynson their heirs and assigns for ever. To hold of us our heirs and successors as of our manor of Estgrenewich in our County of Kent by fealty only in free and common socage and not in chief nor by Knight service And rendering annually to us our heirs and successors the several rents below named and specified. That is to say of and for the aforesaid parcel of land with the appurtenances called Pandolfe's grove four pence . . . And of and for all that chapel of S^t Katherine with the aforesaid small croft or garden to the same adjacent two shillings.

"In [witness] whereof &c.

"Witness the Queen at (. . .) on the second day of November."

These records not only reveal the true dedication, but also confirm the ecclesiastical status of the chapel as a chantry, and thus legally warrant and verify its civil suppression and dissolution, and they inform us of the true date and circumstances of its sale and

diversion to secular purposes, to which it remained appropriated (in the form of malting-house, stables, and cowhouse) till the period of its re-sale and projected restoration in A.D. 1890, a cold shade of neglect of about 309 years' duration.

Unfortunately such records convey no information as to the founder or as to the period and circumstances of the foundation.

The stone coffin mentioned by Thorpe was dug up immediately to the east of the chancel end of the chapel, but no remains of it can now be traced. In the interior I have made no excavation, being generally averse to any disturbance of human remains by way of speculative exploration, should any have been laid to rest within the walls.