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FOLKESTONE PARISH CHURCH:

WITH REFERENCE TO DATE OF ITS EARLIEST PORTION.

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AMIDST the profusion of ornament and colour which now distinguishes this Church, the plain untouched columns and capitals in the chancel attract attention by their primitive simplicity, and provoke inquiry as to their date. The carving of the capitals, an early and crude example of foliage, is, indeed, strikingly peculiar. Sir Stephen Glynne, in his valuable notes on Kentish Churches, describes it as "rude foliage almost of Norman character"; but Canon Scott Robertson, in his article on Folkestone Church (*Archæologia Cantiana*, X., liv), classed all the work of the chancel as Early English, and thought the "almost roughly ornamented" capitals accounted for by the obdurate Kentish ragstone which resisted greater elaboration. He had found similar capitals in Westcliff Church (now allied to St. Margaret's at Cliff), and, presumably, there only; and by Glynne these capitals at Westcliff are classed as *Norman*. Thus we are led to look closely into the history of Folkestone Church with the endeavour to determine the period of the features which have arrested our attention.

The charter of foundation is given in the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, iv., 673, fol. ed. 1823. Here William de Abrincis (or Averenches), lord of Folkestone, recites his ancestor's foundation of the Priory within the precincts of the castle, and sets forth that the monks of their own free will (assent and authority being granted by John, Bishop of Rochester, Vicar-Archbishop of Canterbury after the death of Archbishop William [de Corb(e)uil], in the first year

Photo.] [*Wheeler and Haddock.*

CAPITALS IN FOLKESTONE PARISH CHURCH.

of the vacancy of the See) had desired to go forth to a certain new Church which he had given them beyond the castle, and to a certain place next to the Church, which he had [also] given them.* The event here referred to, viz., the Bishop of Rochester's administration of the See of Canterbury during its vacancy, shews at least that episcopal authority for the removal of the Church and Priory was given in 1137. That year has also been assumed as the date of the charter and the building of the Church; Scott Robertson gives it as 1139. He thought, however, that no remains of a church of that date were now seen, presumably because the architecture would have been purely Norman, whereas he classed the old work of the chancel as Early English. Yet as the Canon makes no distinction between the chancel proper of two bays and the more eastward sacrarium, it may with deference be now submitted that these two divisions of the Church are not contemporary; that whereas the handsome many-moulded lancet windows of the sacrarium are fully developed Early English, the chancel columns, with their rude capitals, are of the earlier period of that style, if indeed they may not be classed as Transitional.

To account for the fact that no building of 1137 or 1139 is now seen, whereas the earliest work in the Church may be dated thirty or forty years later, it is now suggested that that interval may have elapsed between the period of the Bishop's sanction to the removal of the Priory and Church to another site and the erection of the new buildings; that the sanction had been obtained preparatory to building. *The charter is undated;* it defines no more than the time at which episcopal sanction was given to the transference. It is known that the founder, William de Averenches, was living in 1170 (*Historic Peerages*), and possibly his life was further extended, for the date of his death is not ascertained. And from this it follows that the date of the charter and of the Church may have been as late as 1170—1180, to which period the architectural features in the chancel, *i.e.*, the pointed arches resting on circular

* "Verum quia monachi prædicti de castello de Folkestan, in quo fundati fuerunt sua spontanea voluntate assensum et auctoritatem suam præbente venerabili patre domino Johanne Dei gratia Roffensi episcopo, vicaris archiepiscopatus Cantuariæ post mortem domini Willielmi archiepiscopi Cantuariæ, anno primo sede vacante exire voluerint ad quendam novam ecclesiam quam eis dedimus extra dictum castellum . . . . et quendam locum juxta ecclesiam quam eis dedimus." The "locum juxta ecclesiam" doubtless indicates the new priory, or the site of it. Portions of the walls "close on the south side of the Church" remained when Hasted wrote in 1790; and in 1823 the editors of *Monasticon Anglicanum* say that foundations were still to be traced on the south-west side of the Church.

columns with primitively carved capitals and round abaci, may perhaps fairly be attributed. There is also the reflection that if a Church had been built in 1137 or 1139 it is not probable that it should have been replaced by another thirty or even fifty years later, there being no evidence of destruction. This argument—favouring the view that in the oldest features we have remnants of the first Church on the present site—is, however, tentatively advanced with the deference due to other opinion.

The nave and its aisles have been entirely rebuilt, so that we should seek there in vain for evidence of original work; but to this part of the Church we shall presently refer, it appearing convenient previously to consider the capitals which attract our special attention.

These capitals will perhaps at first sight strike many as unique, and probably in a degree they are so; it would be interesting to learn if any similar are found elsewhere than at Westcliff cited by Canon Scott Robertson. But on a little study it is seen that the uniqueness is only one of degree. The "rude foliage"—the broad three-ribbed leaves, alternately long and short, based on the neck-moulding of the column, and having their upper ends curled over so as to form crooks or crochets apparently supporting the abacus—is really the basis of a design, the inception of which may be traced back to early Norman work, and is even extended into Early English. Sir Gilbert Scott, in *Mediæval Architecture*, names it "the simple water-leaf form"; he applies to the design the French term *à crochet*, and classes its beautiful development in the capitals of the Canterbury choir and the eastward Trinity Chapel as Transitional work. These numerous examples at Canterbury are charming in their variety, and much satisfaction lies in the fact that their date is accurately known from the record of the contemporary monk, Gervase. The French architect, William of Sens, brought the design from the cathedral of that place. He worked at the Canterbury choir from 1174 to 1179, and then being disabled by a fall he left the work to be continued by his assistant, an English William, who completed the Trinity Chapel in 1185. These Canterbury capitals do not shew a gradual development of "the simple water-leaf" as it is found at Folkestone in its primitive stage, but the full elaboration of the design which had evidently been matured at Sens and brought thence. The beautiful variety is almost wonderful. The volutes or crooks which at Folkestone are simply round knobs have at Canterbury opened

out like flower-buds, have become divided, foliated and fretted, smaller leaves and blossoms are blended with the broad "water-leaves," the intermediate short leaf is sometimes lost in the elaboration, and ultimately the capital attains all the luxuriance of the classic Corinthian, indeed Sir Gilbert terms them Corinthianesque. That eminent architect thought these capitals never surpassed in excellence, and he gives his preference to the work of the Englishman in Trinity Chapel, where perhaps the ornament is worked out with the greater freedom and invention. It is curious, however, that the simplest capital of the series is one in Trinity Chapel, the later division of the work, viz., at the head of the tomb of the Black Prince. The carving is similar and almost as sparse as that at Folkestone, varying only in having the volute or curling ends of the leaves divided and slightly fretted. At first the difference might be thought a degree of development, but finding the capitals at the foot of the tomb and in the chapel around fully elaborated, it would seem that the simplicity in one instance was merely the freak of the carver. Also there is this difference, that whereas at Canterbury the abacus is square, at Folkestone it is round, and, although not an absolute indication, the square abacus pertains generally to the Norman style and the round abacus to Early English. The date of the Canterbury column, or rather pair of columns, is 1182, and were that of Folkestone *circa* 1170 as has been suggested, the lapse of the few years might seem to account for the difference of elaboration; but, as before said, the sparseness of carving in the one instance at Canterbury may have been merely a matter of taste.

It would assist us to solve the architectural history of the Church had we grounds for thinking that the vanished nave was of earlier date than the portion of the original chancel yet remaining; but such evidence as we have leads to the conclusion that nave and chancel were contemporary. The nave was entirely rebuilt in 1856—59. Sir Stephen Glynne made his visit to the unrestored Church *circa* 1840, and of course his record is very valuable: "The nave has side aisles, from each of which it is divided by a row of three pointed Early English arches of plain character and without mouldings, rising from circular columns." This description answers to the new nave, except that on either side the fourth arch, destroyed in 1705 by a storm, has been replaced. Moreover a *Handbook to Folkestone*, written less than ten years after the restoration, says "the pillars and arches in the nave have

been renewed in *facsimile* of the old ones, but in a different stone." S. J. Mackie, in his *Folkestone and its Neighbourhood*, 1856, gives us a picture of the "interior" of the Church "before the repewing;" and again, in his *Handbook of Folkestone*, 1865, he repeats the woodcut, entitled "the interior before its restoration." Did this picture represent the former *nave* it would afford us valuable evidence, but unfortunately on close inspection it appears that it is the *chancel* which is depicted. We have parts of the two pointed arches abutting on the central tower, with the engaged circular half-columns and the roughly foliated capitals seen to-day; we see beyond the chancel the stone ribs of the tower roof, and in the distance the organ in a gallery at the west end as described. The picture is interesting, but does not help our inquiry as to the old nave. Yet relics of it are found in two half-columns of ragstone built into the westward wall of the tower. The old capitals, however, are gone and replaced by others, plain and unfoliated, perhaps *facsimiles* of those lost.

The central tower is, internally, the most important division of the Church, and it is curious to find that it was the latest; nave and chancel were probably built two hundred years before the tower as we see it, therefore clearly it is not the original. There is no record of its building, or indication of what it succeeded. The true Perpendicular character of the four supporting arches is the only evidence of their date; Glynne terms it Rectilinear, Scott Robertson dates it the end of the fourteenth or early part of the fifteenth century. The many concentric mouldings of the well-proportioned pointed arches are brought down straight to the base of the piers without interruption of imposts at the springing, at the inner angles only are single shafts with octagonal capitals. The ceiling is vaulted in stone, and stone benches around the bases of the piers form an uncommon feature. This handsome tower seems to have been raised in the midst of much older work, but perhaps the short transepts—Glynne says they have been cut short, they now extend but five or six feet beyond the outer lines of the nave aisles—were built at the same time.

Of the chancel—with its two pointed arches on either side, circular columns and primitively carved capitals—the opinion has been ventured that it is part of the original Church. Its aisles, south and north, on the evidence of wills adduced by Scott Robertson, were built or rebuilt respectively in 1464 and 1474. It is refreshing to get a precise date for any part of Folkestone Church. The

directions of the wills in both cases are fairly definite. The south aisle was to adjoin the vestry, as it does to-day, the handsome Herdson monument of 1622 occupying the eastern end. The north aisle was to be rebuilt "on the old wall there," that is to say, the old lines were to be followed; but that a higher pitch was given to it is evidenced by the round clerestory windows which, as no longer of use, are now seen blocked up over the arches of the chancel.

The sacrarium forms the rectangular east end of the Church, the chancel aisles not extending thus far eastward. Whether as now seen it was an addition to the Church, or a substitution for older work, cannot be determined. In the eastern wall the handsome triplet of equal lancet lights—externally plain, without mouldings, but inwardly broadly splayed, the heads accentuated by many mouldings, the jambs displaying slender shafts with foliated capitals—these are characteristic of fully developed Early English, though in its earlier stage. The north and south walls have each two similar but smaller windows, a vesica light is in the gable over the triple lancets, there is a piscina, and two aumbreys. It is these ornate features contrasted with the ruder work of the outer chancel that suggest different dates, the sacrarium being pure Early English, while the two bays of the chancel may be considered Transition. Also suggestive of difference of date is the difference of stone used, ragstone in the chancel, Caen stone in the sacrarium. Before leaving the eastern extremity, mention cannot be omitted of one of the chief treasures of the Church, viz., the canopied tomb, recessed in the north wall without the altar rail, of a knight of Edward III.'s time. The arched canopy is pierced with fine Decorated tracery; the centre finial is gone, but the recumbent mailed effigy and, below, the range of small niches containing figures, are in fair condition.

Canon Matthew Woodward, forty-seven years Vicar of Folkestone and the indefatigable restorer of the Church, has left a history and description of it. In this he has followed Canon Scott Robertson, but attempts to account for the style of the east end by attributing its rebuilding to the period immediately after the reign of King John, when the Church had been destroyed by the French. For the destruction in 1216 he quotes Harris's *History of Kent* (p. 124), but it is evident that it is not the Dauphin's invasion in 1216 to which Harris refers, but to a raid made by the French in 1378. Yet it is not improbable that the Church did suffer in 1216, for Matthew Paris states that the Dauphin attacked and

took all Kentish towns occupied by the adherents of King John, who it is known had lately made Folkestone his quarters (Furley's *Weald of Kent*, i., 369). Could the destruction at this time be proved it would conveniently account for the Early English style of the eastern portion of the building, which is that of the early years of Henry III., but it is clear at least that the Church did not suffer total destruction.

The event of 1378, the raids of the French on the towns of the south coast shortly after the death of the old lion-King Edward III., is a matter of history, and the "burning and spoiling" of Folkestone is related by Lambarde, Kilburne, Harris, and Hasted. The Church is not specially mentioned, but if "the greater part of the town was burnt and spoiled" (Lambarde), it is highly probable that the Church suffered. Canon Woodward does not refer to the catastrophe of this period, although it is quite possible that it had connection with the subsequent rebuilding of the tower in its Perpendicular form.

Beyond the rebuilding of the chancel aisles in 1464 and 1474, already noticed, there appears to be no further record until 1705, when a winter storm destroyed two westward bays of the nave. Authority was sought and obtained by the parishioners to restore one bay only, and we can readily imagine the decadence which befell the structure during the long period of neglect or tasteless ignorance. Thus when Sir Stephen Glynne came to see the Church *circa* 1840 he noted: "The exterior has suffered much mutilation and has a ragged appearance . . . . Most of the windows of the nave are modern, of the vilest description. The west end of the Church is wretched patchwork, the nave having been cut short . . . . by a storm, and the west wall rebuilt in most niggardly incongruous style." In this condition the Church remained until the Rev. M. Woodward became Vicar in 1851; he soon assumed the part of restorer, and indefatigably devoted himself to the restoration and embellishment of his Church during the long period of his vicariate. In 1856 the nave was restored to its original length by the rebuilding of the western arch, and its north aisle was reconstructed, and in September 1859 the nave was reopened after having been completely rebuilt. This is gathered from the Vicar's account, and present appearance supports it. Restoration at that time was rough and destructive; had it been done later in this case the old arches, their columns and capitals, might have been spared.

The work proceeded as funds allowed, and in 1865 the fine

western window (a memorial to Dr. Harvey) took the place of the lancets of 1856, which had lighted the organ gallery now removed. The chancel restoration followed in 1868, when, the ceiling being removed, the roof timbers were restored to view and a vesica window in the eastern gable reopened. This was succeeded by other work until every part of the Church was rehabilitated, and in 1885 was commenced the elaborate decoration which may be said to have engaged the constant attention of the Vicar and his coadjutors until his death in 1898. The sacrarium naturally received great care; the handsome lancet triplet and the restored vesica above were filled with excellent pictured glass, as also the side lancet windows; beautiful alabaster was used in the reredos, in the adjoining arcading of perfect Early English form which faces both side-walls, and in the open balustrade fronting the altar; apostolic figures in rich mosaics were placed in the recessed niches of the arcading; and colour was applied to all wall spaces. The decoration is sumptuous, some will even think it excessive, and may seek relief to the eye in the untouched tomb of the knight in the north wall without the altar precinct.

The zealous Vicar (whose book supplies full description) having completed the sacrarium did not rest until every portion of his Church was richly embellished. Every window—he counts them as twenty-nine—is filled with painted glass and sacred subject; the intervening wall is covered with pictures of the Passion or of ecclesiastical history; the great space above the tower arch giving entrance to the choir exhibits in fresco (or perhaps on panel) the Heavenly Host in concert; the arched entrance to the Lady Chapel (north aisle of chancel) is encompassed and surmounted by the Tree of Jesse, the pictured genealogy of the Saviour; and spandrils and wall spaces throughout the Church, when not pictured, are painted or stencilled in coloured design. The method and effect is sufficiently apparent in the introductory photograph, which also very clearly shews the primitive columns and capitals which have led to the writing of this Paper, these features happily standing unadorned amidst what some of us may think a too lavish display of colour and decoration. Yet all will appreciate the care and liberality that has been bestowed on the sacred edifice.

[By the courtesy of the writer the Editor is allowed to express an opinion with regard to the date of the arcades in question differing from the conclusions tentatively reached in this Paper. Apart from any consideration of the charter of foundation cited in 4 Henry IV. by William de Averenches, the capitals of the voluted laurel or plaintain-leaf pattern may perhaps be regarded as an example of the survival in the thirteenth century of a decorative form which by its rudeness has suggested an earlier date. The general design of the arcades is *Early English* in style, and "the hardness of the stone is sufficient to account for the lack of elaboration" in the carving. The decoration of the mutilated caps of the chancel-arch in the Church of Westcliffe, referred to in the Paper, is similar in character; and, with the exception of the tower and some inserted windows, that Church is an early thirteenth-century building throughout. In the Church of Battle, Sussex, the caps of the nave-arcades shew similar decoration worked in the same hard stone, and they are assigned to the same date as the chancel, which exhibits characteristic Early English work executed in a softer material. These parallels suggest that the Folkestone arcades should not be referred to a date earlier than the first quarter of the thirteenth century, when, if this view be correct, the monks must have rebuilt the Church which they entered on their removal from the castle during the vacancy in the see of Canterbury following upon the death of Archbishop William.—ED.]

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