

POSTLING CHURCH: SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES.

BY G. M. LIVETT, F.S.A.

The foregoing Paper on Postling Church is printed from MS. notes, revised by the author, of the valuable description of the church given by our member and councillor Mr. Aymer Vallance, F.S.A., on the occasion of the Society's visit in July 1912. The gallery which Mr. Aymer Vallance describes as having formerly existed across the chancel, and of which clear signs remain, is so interesting a feature, perhaps unique, that it deserves illustration to shew its exact position. For this purpose Mr. W. H. Elgar of Folkestone, at the Editor's invitation, has kindly supplied a plan of the church with an elevation of a portion of the south wall sufficient to shew the corbels on which the gallery rested, as well as some other features of interest. It will be seen that the gallery, which was about 3 feet wide, ran across exactly midway between the east and west ends of the chancel, at about the same height as the rood-loft at the east end of the nave.

The elevation also shews how the rood-loft rested upon a 6-inch offset on the west side of the east wall of the nave on a level with the springing of the chancel-arch, the lower part of this wall, the chancel-arch wall, being thicker than the other walls of the church.

This peculiar feature demands an explanation. The responds of the arch are undoubtedly Norman. The quoins are composed of Quarr Abbey stone, which is a Norman material, and they shew very plainly the characteristic Norman tooling, and no doubt they originally supported a round-headed Norman arch. The existing arch, which is acutely pointed, has chamfered quoins of Kentish rag, which shew Early English tooling. It is inconceivable that the

Norman wall was originally of the same thickness throughout, and that the Early English builders took the trouble to rebuild it from the level of the impost upwards. For some reason which can only be guessed at, the original Norman builders made the offset, and the Early English builders simply inserted a pointed arch in place of the round one. (Their reason for doing this may have been to get height in the arch for a rood; and it is not unlikely that they made use of the offset to support their rood-beam, just as the builders of the later rood-loft used it to support the floor of their gallery.) In rare cases, as at West Farleigh, the chancel-arch wall is found to be thicker throughout its whole height than the other walls of the church, and it is not unlikely that in this case the Norman builders planned a thicker wall, and when they reached the impost level they decided, perhaps for economy of material, to lessen the thickness by 6 inches.

An examination of the exterior face of the walls, where the masonry is exposed, reveals an unusual variety in their character and materials. For instance, the lowest part of the south wall of the chancel is faced with small flint-stones; this is succeeded by several courses of what appears to be iron-stone, the lowest course laid aslant like herring-bone work, and the others bedded flat, with much mortar; above that the flint occurs again. The external quoins of the nave are, for the most part, of Quarr Abbey stone, as is also the little Norman light on the north side. In the south-west quoin, however, this material was used only up to a height of about 9 feet above the present gutter, and from that point upwards the builders used Kentish rag. In the angles of the original chancel, remains of which still exist, the quoins are of rough uncut iron-stone. It is quite clear, therefore, that the original builders were hard put to it to find materials, and that they would have to study economy. Their successors found themselves in no better case, for in addition to Kentish rag they used Caen stone and chalk.

Mr. Elgar's plan shews the lines of the original east end of the chancel: the line of the inner face of the destroyed east

wall nearly coincides with that of the lower of the two steps at the altar-rail. In relation to the nave the width of the chancel is less than is usually found in early-Norman churches. But this peculiarity is seen in other churches in this neighbourhood.

The Early English builders seem to have built the tower, made the existing chancel-arch, and replaced most of the original windows by tall lancets. The lancet on the north side of the chancel, composed entirely of Caen-stone, faced with the Early English chisel, was placed a little to the east of the middle of the wall of the original chancel. The priest's window on the south side seems to be a little later in date. It was left to fourteenth-century builders to lengthen the chancel. Mr. Elgar has taken cymographs of the mouldings of the beam-ends on the front corbels which supported the loft of the high rood and the gallery in the chancel, and supplies also a sketch of the recess in the south-west corner of the chancel. The stone, mentioned by Mr. Aymer Vallance, at the head of the recess is a bit of window tracery, of late date, in Kentish rag.

Mr. Aymer Vallance's Paper calls attention to another interesting feature—the remains of the scheme of decoration of the nave walls. The accompanying sketch is based on a photograph by Mr. Vallance. Personal examination has revealed some of the details, which are very faint. The irregular lines shew the limits of the remains, part of the consecration cross and of the border beneath it having been obliterated. The fragment of vertical border on the left side of the sketch is taken from slight remains on the north side of the west door, which are just sufficient to shew how the horizontal border was stopped upon the vertical one; but there is not enough of the latter to enable one to recover its pattern.* Measurements indicate that the arcade was

* Of the two strong vertical lines at the left edge of the sketch, the outside one indicates the jamb of the door and the inside one a line in carmine. The broken line between them indicates the present edge of the plaster bearing signs of colour on a diagonal pattern. In the sketch the dark shading indicates carmine, in which colour all the lines appear except those of the caps and the secondary lines of the vertical joints of the masonry. The lighter shading in vertical lines indicates an orange tint.

cut by the border at the half-arch, as shewn. By careful measurement, also, Mr. Elgar has found the centres of the trefoiled arches. "The horizontal springing line remains faintly indicated on the walls, and vertical lines from them to the apex of each arch are also there." The apices just touch the border, which runs 17 inches above the springing-line. The springing-line is 4 feet 4 inches above the floor. The measurement from centre to centre of two successive shafts is 2 feet 3 inches. Only a small portion of the slender shafts, just under the capitals, remains; and there is no sign of bases, but one can easily reconstruct the missing parts in imagination. Possibly the bases rested on a string-course at the height of (say) 15 inches above the floor, which would be about the height of movable benches placed against the wall. The arcade would thus represent a series of canopied seats all round the nave. The consecration cross (7 feet above the floor), painted on the background of imitation masonry, which doubtless was carried up to the wall-plate (17 feet), would have been repeated at suitable intervals, alternating perhaps with some other design. In spite of its fragmentary character it may be said that there are very few churches which contain remains of early wall-decoration so complete.

Dedication tablets are so rare that our readers will be glad to see a rough copy of the Postling example. The copy published some time ago in the local *Parish Magazine* is not quite correct.* The absence of a date is unfortunate, but its position seems to connect it with the thirteenth-century remodelling of the church. Mr. Vallance writes asking whether this "squiggle" can possibly stand for the genitive of *presbyter*. Smith and Wace, *Dict. of Chr. Biog.*, describe this Eusebius, who is commemorated in the Roman Calendar on August 14th, as "Presbyter, confessor, at Rome, A.D. 358, and by some styled martyr." A further suggestion then may be *martyri*, but, since *Eusebii* is clearly a genitive, there is one little word which is imperatively demanded to

* Kindly sent to me by the present rector, the Rev. H. F. Smith, together with a plan of the church made for the purposes of the restoration in 1897.

complete the grammatical construction, and that is *die*; and, as *die* sometime appears in old MSS. as represented by *d* with a small *e* in *alt.*, I have little doubt that it explains the puzzle of the "squiggle." This conjecture receives some confirmation from the fact that mediæval scribes occasionally turned the loop of D in the opposite direction, as seen in the month-name *ÆSENBRĒ* on the Brookland font. The peculiar position of the I, inscribed, to save space, within the lower member of the R, in both *Matris* and *Marie* in the last line, may be noticed.

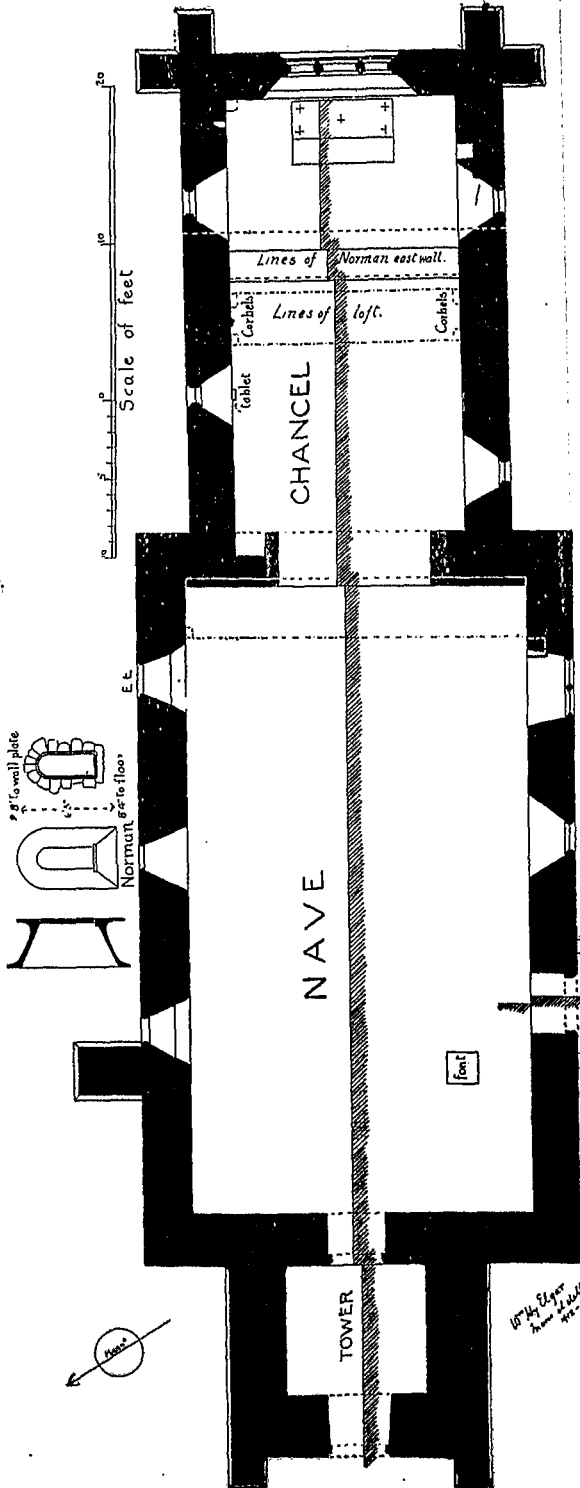
There seems to be a doubt also about the interpretation of the first word of the last line, which is clearly engraved DI with contraction mark over the I. I venture to think that it is meant for *Dei* rather than for *Domini*. Only recently I came across both words contracted in the same sentence in a charter in Kemble's *Cod. Dipl.*: "Ecclesia beatae genetricis di et dni nri ihu Xpi."

I should, therefore, extend the text thus: [Ante diem] undevicesimum Kalendas Septembres | Sancti Eusebii Confessoris | die hec ecclesia | fuit dedicata | in honore Sancte | Dei Matris Marie.

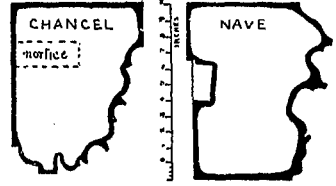
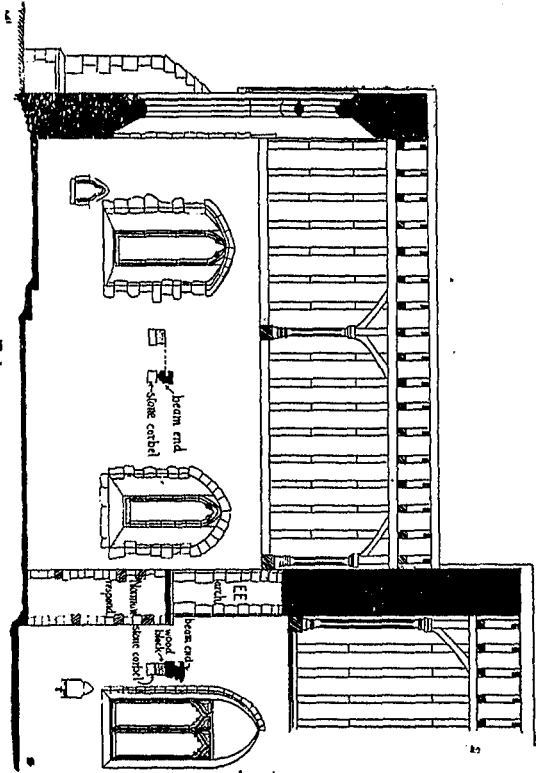
And translate: the nineteenth of the Calends of September (Aug. 14th): on the day of St. Eusebius, Confessor, this church was dedicated in honour of Blessed Mary, Mother of God.

The mark after *matris* seems to be an imperfection in the original stone, which the sculptor avoided by skewing back the final *s*.

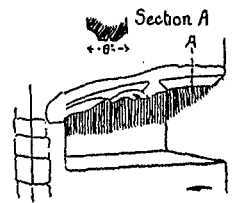
Members of the Archæological Society will be grateful both to Mr. Aymer Vallance for his interesting Paper, and to Mr. Elgar for his admirable plans.



Elevation



Sections of beams.



Recess at N.W. angle of chancel.

POSTLING CHURCH

10 1/2 by 21 feet
Area of chancel
1823