

# ST. MARY'S, SANDWICH, IN THE MIDDLE AGES

By Ivor Bulmer-Thomas

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“IN the towne of Sandwich are three fair parish churches governed by three godly and learned ministers, which there most diligently preach the word of God”.

So declared a manuscript in the possession of William Boys in 1792 when he wrote his monumental *Collections for an History of Sandwich*,<sup>1</sup> to which anyone now writing about that famous cinque port must acknowledge his indebtedness. The three churches—St. Mary's, St. Peter's and St. Clement's—are still there, but only St. Clement's is now a parish church. From time to time St. Mary's was held in plurality with St. Clement's, and by an Order in Council dated 25th October, 1948<sup>2</sup> the benefices and parishes of Sandwich St. Clement, Sandwich St. Mary, Sandwich St. Peter and Stonar were formed into the united benefice and parish of Sandwich, and St. Clement's was declared to be the parish church. The legal status of St. Mary's since that date has been a chapel of ease.

All three of the churches in Sandwich, itself an almost unspoilt medieval town, are of early medieval origin, and the modern borough contains yet a fourth medieval place of worship in the chapel of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, though when founded this was just outside the boundary. The earliest identifiable fragments of Norman work in Sandwich are now to be found in the south-west and north-west angles of St. Peter's,<sup>3</sup> but there is no doubt that St. Mary's was the earliest of the three churches to be founded.

## Pre-Conquest History.

The precise date of its foundation is not easy to settle. If we believe

<sup>1</sup> *Collections for an History of Sandwich in Kent. With notices of the other Cinque Ports and Members, and of Richborough.* By William Boys, Esq., F.A.S., Canterbury: Printed for the author by Simmons, Kirkby and Jones, MDCCCXCII (an error for MDCCXCII). This will be cited as Boys.

<sup>2</sup> Published in the *London Gazette*, 26th October, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. V. J. Torr in an unpublished memorandum prepared to put the case for the preservation of St. Mary's, when its demolition was proposed in 1954. I am indebted to Mr. Torr for kindly reading this paper and making several helpful suggestions.

the author of the (probably late Elizabethan) manuscript<sup>4</sup> already mentioned, who claims to be drawing upon the 11th-century Augustinian monk Goscelin, the first church on the site was one of two monastic churches built by Queen Domneva in 640 in expiation of the murder of two princes of the royal house of Kent at the instigation of King Egbert. This date cannot be correct as Egbert did not ascend the throne of Kent till 664; there are other inaccuracies,<sup>5</sup> and although Domneva was the undoubted foundress of the abbey at Minster-in-Thanel not far away there is no mention of a house at Sandwich among the seven monastic establishments enumerated in the "Privilege granted to churches and monasteries of Kent by King Wihtred (690-725) at a Kentish Witenagemot at Baccanceld" (Bapchild, near Sittingbourne).<sup>6</sup>

These are formidable difficulties, but there is one important piece of evidence on the other side. When he came to deal with Sandwich in his *Itinerary*<sup>7</sup> John Leland commented:

"Ther be yn the Town iiii principal Gates, iiii Paroche Chyrches, of the which sum suppose that S. Marye's was sumtyme a Nunnery".

Though Leland wrote in the reign of Henry VIII, his words were almost certainly unknown to the author of the *Sandwich Manuscript*, for they were not printed till 1710.<sup>8</sup> *The Sandwich Manuscript* and Leland are therefore independent witnesses to a belief in Sandwich in the existence of an early monastic establishment on the site of St. Mary's. Local traditions often enshrine a kernel of truth, even if they can be challenged on details, and there seems no motive for inventing the story of an earlier monastery on the site; on the contrary, it would be wholly credible that the great monastic house of St. Peter and St. Paul, later St. Augustine, at Canterbury should inspire more modest foundations in its neighbourhood. The silence of the "Privilege" could be explained if it had already disappeared by the time of King Wihtred.

<sup>4</sup> The *Sandwich Manuscript*, as it will be termed, is reproduced in Boys, pp. 835-43, and the section relating to St. Mary's occurs on pp. 829-41. It does not appear to be any longer in existence.

<sup>5</sup> For example, "Dampneva" (=Domneva) is described as "queen and aunt to King Egbert" though she was really his cousin and married to a Mercian prince; and, as Boys notes, one of the murdered princes is called Ethelbrige instead of Ethelred. There is no reference to Sandwich in Goscelin's *Vita S. Augustini* in either of the two versions, and the reference in his *Vita S. Vulfildae* is only to the port; but he appears to have been a voluminous writer.

<sup>6</sup> They were Upmynster (? St. Peter's-in-Thanel), Raculf (Reculver), Suthmynster (Minster-in-Thanel), Dofras (Dover), Folcanstan (Folkestone), Limming (Lympe) and Scepeis at Hoe (? Minister in Sheppey). The Privilege was confirmed in 716 at Clovecho.

<sup>7</sup> Leland, *Itinerary*, vii, 125.

<sup>8</sup> John Stowe made a copy in 1576, but the chance that the author of the *Sandwich Manuscript* had seen it is remote.

The manuscript goes on to state that the church, having long since been destroyed by the Danes, was repaired at the charges of Queen Emma, wife of King Canute. Though there is no confirmatory evidence, this is credible. Canute may be regarded as the founder of the port and town of Sandwich—his father Sweyn may have made a beginning—and the Viking sovereign, sincerely pious after his fashion, would certainly have required a parish church. Emma, known also by her Saxon name of Aelgifu, and to the Northmen as Alfifa, came over from Normandy in 1017 to be the second wife of Canute, who had early in that year been elected king of all England.

### 12th Century.

If the manuscript is correct, this church would have been built between Canute's marriage in 1017 and his death in 1035, but there is now no visible trace of it, unless stones have been used in rebuilding. It is only with the coming of the Normans that the building gives evidence of its own history, and very remarkable it is. This evidence is mainly contained at the west end of the church in the responds of two arcades; the bases of two columns in line with the northern respond may be seen by lifting up the hatches placed over them when they were uncovered during the repairs of 1956, and similar bases on the south side were then uncovered but had temporarily to be covered again to facilitate the repairs.<sup>9</sup> (It is hoped one day to expose them permanently.) The easternmost base of the north arcade is still above the floor level, and on it have been superimposed a stone respond of the 15th century and a wooden respond of the 17th century. The southern respond against the west wall is of three orders and the circular shafts are terminated by a semi-circular moulding and capped with plain cushion capitals surmounted by square abaci. Above this respond there survives a portion of the masonry of the south arcade projecting from the west wall of the church, and high up on the left side as the observer faces the west wall can be seen a disfigured Romanesque capital and on the right-hand side a fragment of a string course. The shafts in the northern respond are similarly capped except that one of the cushion capitals has a fine carved decoration.

<sup>9</sup> The existence of these bases was known to the Rev. Arthur M. Chichester, Vicar of St. Mary's, who in his *Notes on the Churches of St. Clement and St. Mary, Sandwich*, written for the British Archaeological Association in 1883, said: "The ruined columns of the first arches of this Norman nave remain at the west wall, and two perfect rows of Norman bases were found in a line with them below the present floor." (p. 349.) The past tense presumably refers to the restoration of the church in 1872, when *inter alia* a concrete floor was laid down for new pews.

The lines of the arcades divide the church into two approximately equally aisles with a rather narrower nave. The capitals are clearly of an early date. Mr. V. J. Torr in the memorandum already mentioned observes that the responds show the same right-angled orders which are notable in the ruins of the nave of St. Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury. This was begun in 1070, and Mr. Torr considers it fair to assume that the responds at St. Mary's can be dated c.1100-1110. The capitals also resemble in their design those in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, which were set up c.1100, though the carving was in many cases executed later. The conclusion that already at the beginning of the 12th century St. Mary's possessed a nave and two broad and lofty aisles is highly probable. This was remarkable in a parish church.

The church is built in the main of worked Caen stones with substantial areas of flint and some bricks and tiles. It is probable that the Caen stones are those used by the original Norman builders, but the building itself and the written records tell us that the church has passed through many vicissitudes and has several times been re-fashioned after disasters that must be almost unparalleled in the history of a parish church. Two further pieces of direct evidence of Norman work can be seen in the external west wall, where the jambs and arch of a round-headed opening now blocked inside are visible and also a small round arch. It is unlikely that there were ever windows in these positions, and it seems probable that the stones of Romanesque windows were used again when the wall was re-made—like the stone with a carved fleur-de-lis surmounting one of the windows. This west wall with its lovely colours and varying textures is a perfect termination to Church Street, a medieval street with three overhanging houses, and it is obvious at a glance that it was not made in one piece at one time. There are now only two gables, one small roof covering the north aisle and a larger roof the nave and former south aisle; but the break in the masonry of the larger gable indicates that the north and south aisles and the nave originally had three separate roofs with three separate gables.

### **13th Century.**

Four surviving features in the church show that the Norman building did not go unaltered for long. In the Early English period, c.1200, the lancet window at the west end of the south wall must have been constructed; and the string course running below it and along the south wall and part of the west wall belongs to the same period. To the 13th century there can be ascribed the very interesting tall recess capped by a pointed arch in the north wall of the chancel. It is 11 ft.

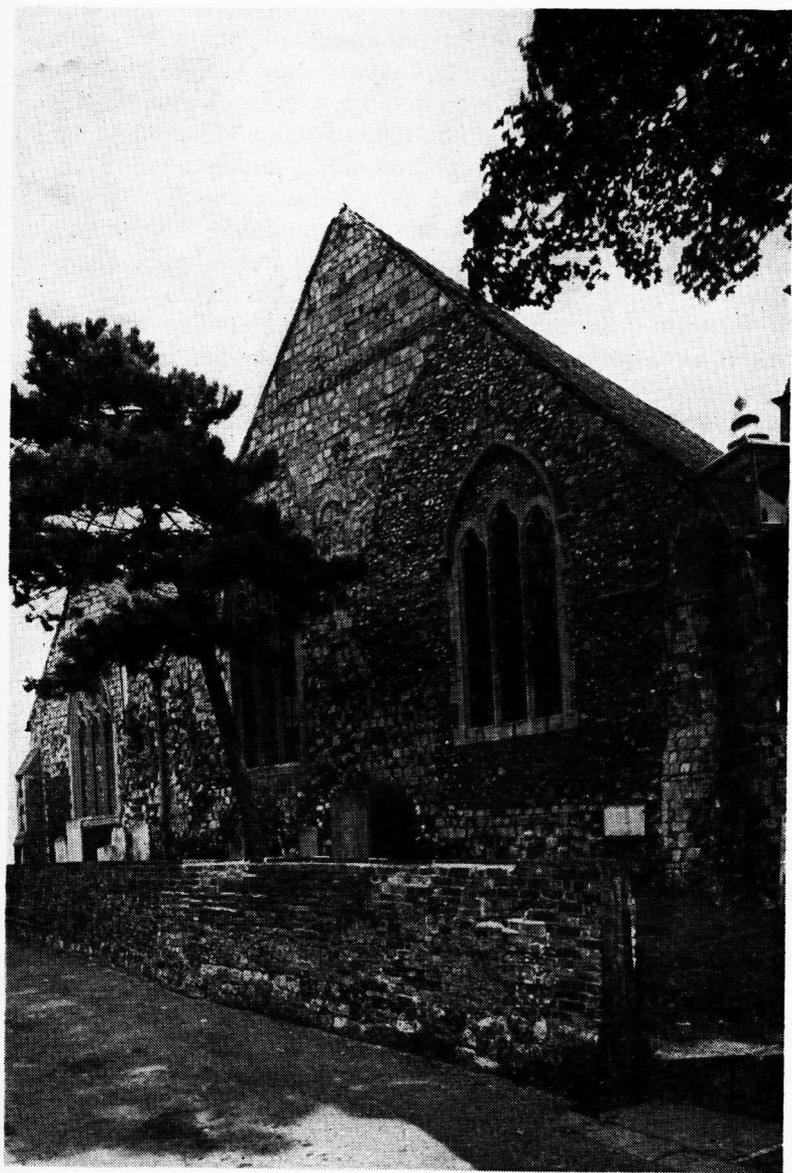


FIG. 1. West end of St. Mary's, Sandwich, seen from Church Street, and showing how the medieval nave and south aisle were put under one roof; a re-used Norman window head is visible (page 36).

high to the point of the arch. There are similar tall recesses in Stelling church, near Canterbury,<sup>10</sup> in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, Northampton, in the church of All Saints, Hereford, and in a few other places, but they are not common. The recess at St. Mary's came to be known as "the aumbry for St. Bridget's heart", and was so termed as recently as 1956 in the application for a faculty to demolish the church. We shall see later that a tall vessel to contain this relic existed in the 15th century, but originally the recess, like the similar ones elsewhere, was probably constructed to house a cross or banner staves. The most puzzling of the four features of this period is a circular pillar of the 13th century standing against the south wall of the chancel at its junction with the nave. It is unrelated to anything else in the building, and what it signifies is a mystery. Its base could with advantage be exposed at some time.

#### **14th Century.**

The narrow lancet window in the south-west angle must have been typical of the fenestration of St. Mary's in the 13th century, but in the first half of the 14th there came a demand for more light, and large windows were made in the Decorated style then in favour. Of the re-fenestration of this period six windows survive, and differences in detail suggest that they were not all made at one time. Three of them are in the west wall. The window at the west end of the north aisle and that at the west end of the nave are still much as they were when first made, at a time when the geometrical pattern was just on the point of yielding to the curvilinear; the window at the west end of the south aisle with a blocked upper portion has probably been re-fashioned later. Two of the Decorated windows, identical in style, are in the north wall, one on each side of the north porch, and the sixth, with interlacing curved tracery is in the south wall of the chancel. Mr. Torr thinks that in the straight joints of the internal masonry he can see signs of how this Decorated window took the place of an earlier lancet. It is likely that the blocked window at the east end of the south aisle, of which the outline can be wholly seen outside and partly inside, also dates from this re-fenestration.

In 1312 St. Mary's received the first of many charitable gifts recorded in the church deeds. This was 6s. 8d. a year in perpetuity given by Walter le Draper out of a house in Yeldhalstrete for the support of a lamp light to burn early and late before the image of the Holy Cross in St. Mary's church; the grant was confirmed to the wardens by

<sup>10</sup> *Kent Churches 1954*, by H. R. Pratt Boorman and V. J. Torr, p. 63.

Gilbert Jakmyn in 1445. Summaries of such gifts were made by Boys from an examination of the original deeds and were published by him under the title "Evidences of the parish of St. Mary"; they constitute a mine for the historian of St. Mary's between the years 1312 and 1746.<sup>11</sup>

The incumbents of St. Mary's are known continuously from 1310.<sup>12</sup> Until the union of benefices in Sandwich St. Mary's was a vicarage in the gift of the Archdeacon of Canterbury, though some of the incumbents described themselves as rectors, and perhaps not surprisingly as they were entitled to both great and small tithes. There were keen disputes in the 14th century between the vicars of St. Mary's and the rectors of Eastry regarding the tithes of a small portion of land to the south-west of the town known as Puttocks Down. The case was several times tried in the ecclesiastical court of Canterbury. A definitive sentence against the vicar of St. Mary's was given in 1346, but this did not prevent further suits, with like results, in 1356 and 1439.<sup>13</sup> The anxiety of the vicars of St. Mary's to press their claim can be understood for in 1384 St. Mary's was included among poor livings not taxed to the tenth.<sup>14</sup>

From this time there dates the earliest of the tombs of many men famous in the history of Sandwich. On the outside of the south wall of the chancel can be seen a projection which is puzzling until we read in the *Sandwich Manuscript* that the body of William Lord Clinton, founder of the Carmelite house in Sandwich, was buried under the gilded arch in the wall on the south side of the church, "which was mured up in the time of King Edward the sixth, but is yet nevertheless to be seen in the church yard". A later passage in that manuscript tells us: "In the 20th yeare of the reigne of king Edward the first, 1292, William lord Clinton, lord of Folkestone and Goulston, of his owne charges built a faire monastery of Carmelites or black friers in the south side of the towne of Sandwiche".<sup>15</sup> Boys observes that "black" was a mistake for "white friars,"<sup>16</sup> and notes that according to John Bale, himself a Carmelite and historian of the order in the reign of Henry VIII, the house was founded by Henry Cowfield, a German, in the year 1272.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Reproduced in Boys, pp. 377-81. Walter le Draper's gift and Gilbert Jakmyn's confirmation are summarized in Items 21 and 22.

<sup>12</sup> A list prepared by the Rev. A. M. Chichester is inscribed on a board in the church.

<sup>13</sup> See Boys, p. 359.

<sup>14</sup> *Chron. W. Thorn, inter decem scriptores a Twysden*, col. 2165, 2169, cited by Boys, p. 312.

<sup>15</sup> Boys, p. 842. Strictly, 1292 is the twenty-first of Edward's regnal years.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 842.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

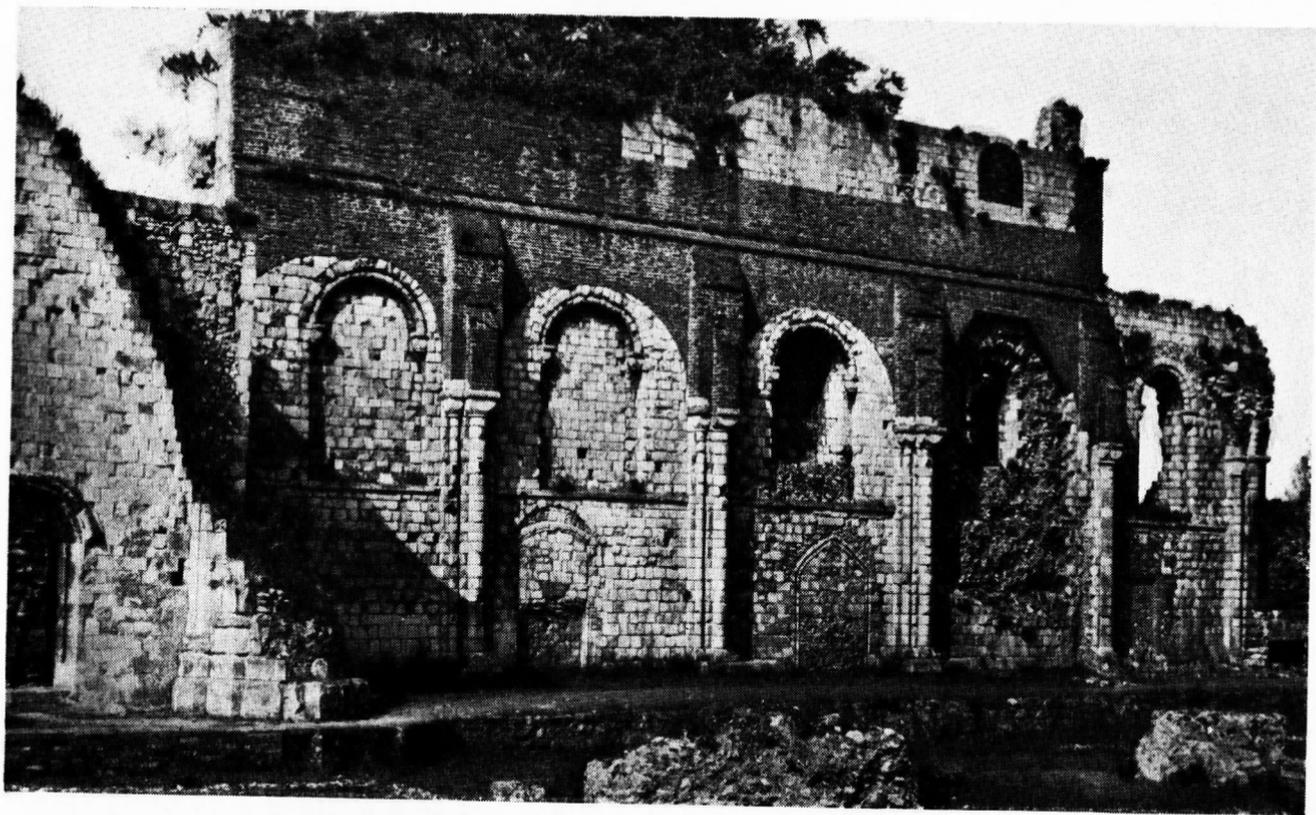


FIG. 2. North wall of north aisle of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, 1070-99, showing capitals similar to those in St. Mary's, Sandwich (page 36).

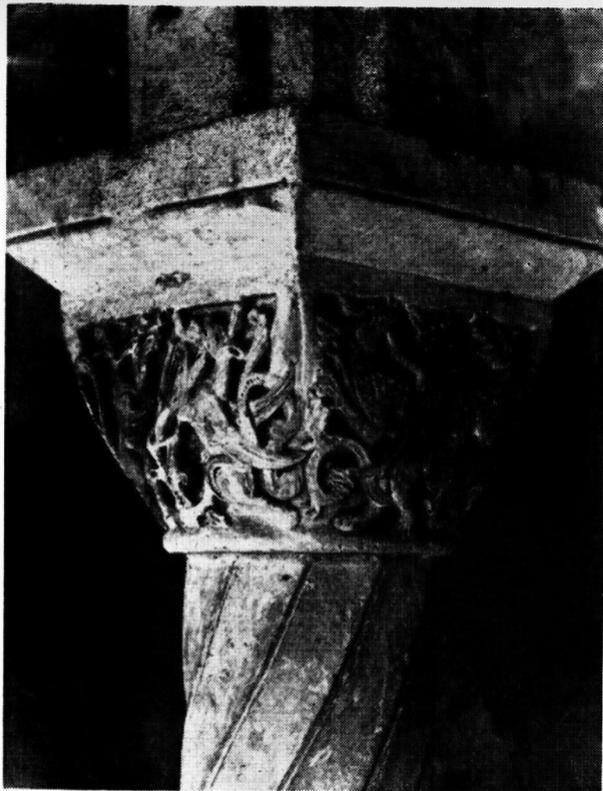


FIG. 3. A capital in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, c.1100, (carving later) (page 36).



FIG. 4. Capital of west respond of former north arcade of St. Mary's, Sandwich, c. 1100 (page 36).

It is probable that the house was founded by Henry Cowfield in 1272 but was poorly endowed and was re-founded a generation later. This was the explanation given in 1799 by Edward Hasted, who wrote:

“Henry Cowfield, a German, in the year 1272, being the last year of K. Henry III's reign, founded a priory in the town of Sandwich, for the order of friars called Carmelites, and afterwards, from the habit they wore, White Friars, but his endowment of it was so small, that Reynold, or more properly William, Lord Clinton, who was a much larger benefactor to it in the 20th year of K. Edward I, was afterwards reputed the sole founder of it”.<sup>18</sup>

There remains one big difficulty, common to the *Sandwich Manuscript* and to Hasted, that William Lord Clinton had not been born in 1292, and that the Christian name of the Lord Clinton who was alive at that time (though not yet ennobled) was John.<sup>19</sup> This John de Clinton, of Amington and Maxstoke in the county of Warwick, was probably born in 1258 and summoned to Parliament by writ in 1299, whence he is held to have become Lord Clinton. He married about 1290 Ida, daughter of William d'Odinsells, also of Maxstoke, and died in 1310. His son John, born in 1303, was summoned to Parliament by writ from 1322, and a younger son, William, born about 1304, was summoned from 1330, whence he also is judged to have become Lord Clinton; in 1337 he was created Earl of Huntingdon, and on his death in 1354 his honours became extinct. What the *Sandwich Manuscript* has to say about the Carmelite monastery would harmonize with the life of this nobleman except for the date. He was Justice of Kent from 1332, and Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports from 1330 to 1343. In 1331 he sent a petition to Rome to found a college of chantry priests in Maxstoke church but changed his mind in 1337 and founded a priory of Austin canons at Maxstoke. In 1332 and 1348 he procured charters for fairs at Eltham and at Ashford in Kent, two of his wife's manors. She was Juliane, daughter of Sir Thomas de Leyburne and widow of two previous husbands, and she

<sup>18</sup> Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol. IV, p. 267. It may be noted that a house built near the site and called “The White Friars” came into the possession of the family of William Boys. The lay-out of the friary was ascertained by excavations in 1936.

<sup>19</sup> For the details that follow I am indebted to *The Complete Peerage*, sub. *vv.* Clinton, vol. III, pp. 312-13, and Huntingdon VI, vol. VI, pp. 648-50. The difficulty was appreciated by T. D. Fosbrooke writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1830, Part I, pp. 31-32, but he increased it by failing to recognize a William, Lord Clinton before the 15th century. Further evidence of the confusion in the *Sandwich Manuscript* is provided by the fact that the manor of Goldston was in the possession of the Leyburne family at least from 1266 until it was brought in marriage by Juliane to William, Lord Clinton (J. R. Planché, *A Corner of Kent*, p. 70).

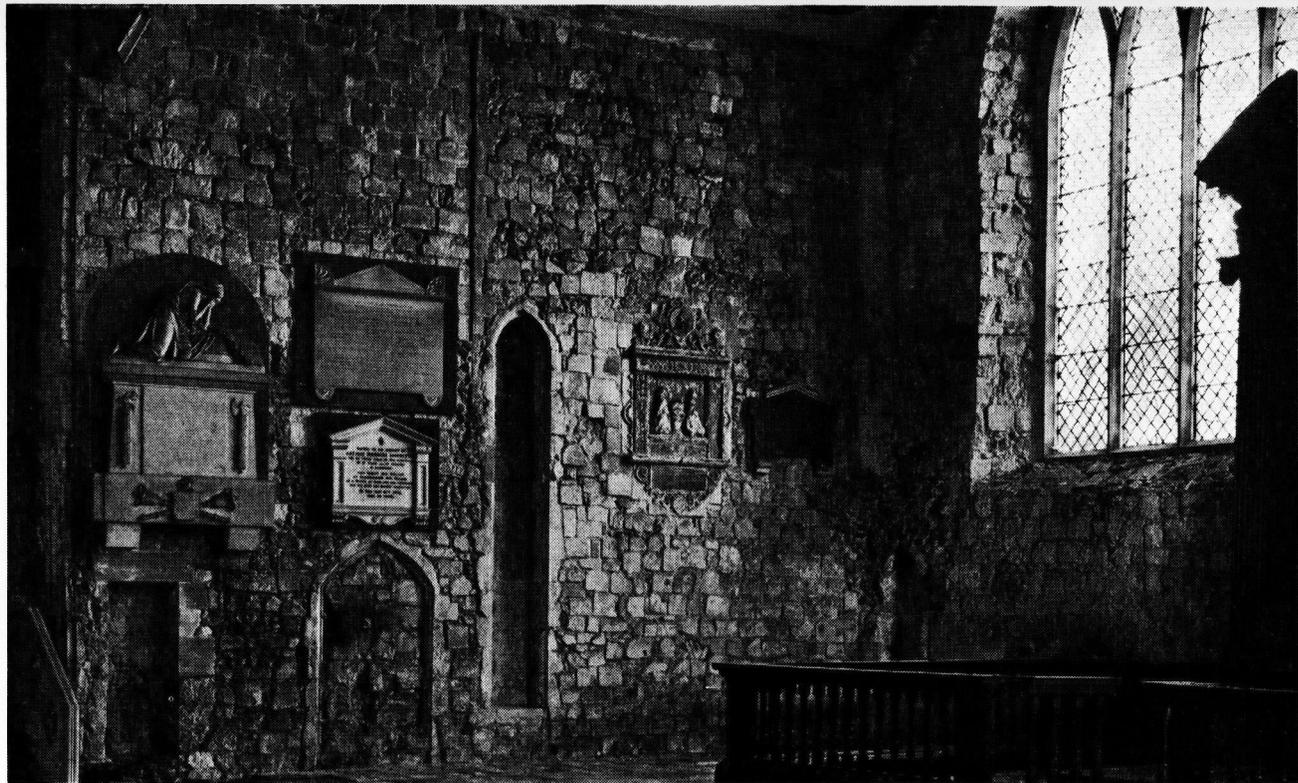


FIG. 5. North-east aspect of the chancel of St. Mary's, Sandwich, showing, from left to right, a medieval rectangular recess (aumbry?), a blocked doorway, a tall locker or 'aumbry for St. Bridget's heart' and an undecorated niche (piscina?), also 18th century altar rails and monuments (page 39).

brought him great wealth and position. By his will dated 23 August 1354 he desired to be buried in the priory he had founded at Maxstoke, but it is possible that his widow ignored the request and had him buried in her native county, with which he himself had many connections. She was in her turn buried in 1367 in St. Anne's Chapel in the church of St. Augustine at Canterbury. The account in the *Sandwich Manuscript* cannot therefore be taken as it stands, but it may dimly embody a correct tradition, and the projection on the south chancel of St. Mary's may be that of William Lord Clinton. It would be worthwhile some day to see if the gilded arch still exists behind the masonry of the chancel just underneath the south window.

Midway between the deaths of John and William de Clinton, some notable person was buried in the centre of the nave of St. Mary's. He (or possibly she) must have been highly respected to have been buried in so conspicuous a place—for there is no reason to doubt that the slab bearing a floriated cross resting upon some animal has always been in that position. It might have been moved from that position but hardly to it. There are three other such floriated crosses in Kent, at Ickham, Adisham and Hillbrough (this last taken from Reculver). Around the sides of the slab are the remains of an inscription in Lombardic characters. It is tantalizingly deficient, in that there is no clue to the name of the person commemorated, but what has survived is of immense interest, for a date is clearly given, and dated inscriptions of that age are rare. Boys noticed this ledger slab in the following words:<sup>20</sup>

“On an old stone are the remains of a cross flory  
resting on a dog or lion, and the following imperfect  
inscription in old characters . . . ie novembris anno . . .  
. . . . . i: m: ccc: xxx . . . : cuju . . . . .”

It is comforting to think that, despite the generations of worshippers, visitors and workmen who have walked over it the inscription is no more defaced now than it was in 1792. Indeed, Mr. Torr with keener eyes than Boys reads the date as 1333,<sup>21</sup> and my reading agrees with his. We may reconstruct what is left of the inscription as: . . . [d]ie novembris anno [Domin]i mcccxxxiii: cuiu[s anime propitiatur Deus.]

Whose body lies under the stone? The cross suggests a priest,

<sup>20</sup> Boys, p. 320.

<sup>21</sup> In the memorandum mentioned above. Sir Stephen Glynne must have been in a hurry to escape from “an unsightly and deformed building” when he wrote that the letters were “too much worn to be decyphered”. (*Notes on the Churches of Kent*, p. 39.) This was between 1829 and 1840.

but the date cannot easily be fitted in with any of the incumbents; nor can it be harmonized with any of the known benefactors of St. Mary's. It cannot, in particular, be fitted in with William Condy, who was mayor of Sandwich in 1311, for he was the king's bailiff in 1354 and witnessed deeds in 1354 and 1366; and according to the *Sandwich Manuscript* the bodies of William Condie merchant and Mawde his wife were buried in the south aisle near unto the Lord Clinton.<sup>22</sup> There is now no trace of their tomb in the south aisle, any more than there is of the tomb of Sir Edward Ringeley, made seneschal of Calais by Henry VIII, and his wife Elizabeth, which the manuscript asserts to have been erected in the reign of Edward VI.

According to the manuscript, this William Condy of his own charge erected a chantry in St. Mary's, "superstitiously perswaded that it was for his soul's health". The *Sandwich Customal*, a more reliable authority, says the foundation was the joint work of William and his father John Condy (Coundy or Condi); the patronage was assigned to the mayor and commonalty, and the chaplain was obliged to celebrate a morn-mass there.<sup>23</sup> References to the "morn-mass altar" in St. Mary's are probably to the altar in this chantry. It is not known to what saint this chantry was dedicated. At later dates it is known to have been endowed with a tenement in or near Barnsend. This was the first of several chantries founded in Sandwich. The most famous was that established by Thomas Elys, a wealthy merchant, in St. Peter's church in 1392,<sup>24</sup> but Elys or Ellis was also a benefactor of St. Mary's and is so commemorated, along with John and William Condy, in the bederoll of St. Mary's.<sup>25</sup>

This fascinating document, drawn up some time after 1447,<sup>26</sup> rehearses the "good doers" of St. Mary's, and asks for prayers for their souls. The parish priest was paid 12d. annually for reading it on Sundays.<sup>27</sup> It is of great help in unravelling the changes that took

<sup>22</sup> See Boys, p. 840.

<sup>23</sup> *Habent maior et communitas cantariam Johannis Coundy et Willielmi filii eiusdem Johannis in ecclesia beate Marie dicte ville; in qua cantaria si quis capellanus eiusdem cantarie fuerit missam matutinalem celebrabit.* The *Sandwich Customal* is now deposited on loan among the Kent archives at Maidstone.

<sup>24</sup> See Boys, pp. 185-7, and for the royal licence of mortmain and other documents, pp. 190-96. Thomas Rollyng, vicar of St. Mary's, was one of three persons to whom various properties were enfeoffed for the support of this chantry, and the same persons were feoffees of St. Thomas's Hospital, founded a few months later by the same benefactor.

<sup>25</sup> Reproduced in Boys, pp. 372-73.

<sup>26</sup> In which year Thomas Mowton, for whom prayers are asked, ceased to be vicar of St. Mary's.

<sup>27</sup> See Boys, p. 364. The bederoll can no longer be traced. According to Woodruff in his *Inventory of the Parish Registers and Records of Kent* (1922), a framed fragment of the bederoll formerly existed in the vestry at St. Mary's.

place in the fabric towards the close of the Middle Ages and in understanding the religious life of those days.

This help is all the more valuable because a series of disasters was about to fall upon St. Mary's. Sandwich suffered much from the depredations of the French, and in the reign of Richard II (1377-99) they set fire to St. Mary's. After recording the occurrence, the *Sandwich Manuscript* adds that the church was repaired or rebuilt mainly by Sir William Leverick (or Loveryk) of Ash, and his wife Emma, daughter of Sir John Septvans, also of Ash. Their bodies, according to the manuscript, "lie in the north side of the same church in an arched sepulchre in the church wall, and were buried in the reign of Henry the fourth". The tomb still exists under the beautiful cusped canopy, but it is now hidden by the altar tomb of Joseph Jordan, who died in 1747, and his wife and infant daughter; it would be a work of piety at some future date to remove the Jordan tomb to a more appropriate place.

In his address to the British Archaeological Association in 1883 the Rev. Arthur M. Chichester included this reference to the sack of the church by the French: "I may state that, when the floor was dug out to lay concrete under the present seats, a layer of ashes, apparently the remains of a conflagration, was found extending over some space at the western part of the church."<sup>28</sup>

### 15th Century.

It is uncertain how extensive this restoration *c.* 1400 could have been. Six or seven windows of earlier date survived, as we have noted—for at that time in Kent any new windows would have had vertical tracery in the Perpendicular style—and it is probable that the Norman arcades of the north and south aisles also survived, the first alterations coming later. The language of the *Sandwich Manuscript* is ambiguous, for while it says that the church was "destroyed by the Frenchmen", it describes Sir William and Dame Emma as "the principal repairers or builders of St. Maries church after it was burnt by the french". In our own days even in official documents it is common to find churches restored after war damage as bring "destroyed" and "rebuilt", and it is likely that the repairs at St. Mary's were of this order. From this date St. Mary's appears to have had a central tower, though whether it was built at this time or had already existed is unknown.

If Sir William Loveryk had really "rebuilt" St. Mary's after the

<sup>28</sup> *Notes on the Churches of St. Clement and St. Mary, Sandwich*, p. 342. The laying of the concrete would presumably have been in 1872 during the restoration of that year.

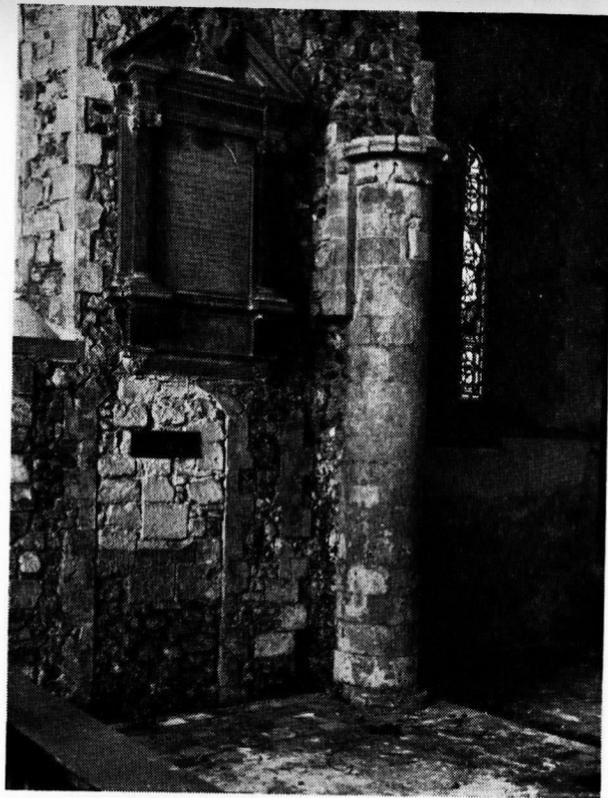


FIG. 6. South-east aspect of the chancel of St. Mary's, Sandwich, showing priest's blocked doorway and 13th century pillar, with 17th century Hougham memorial above (page 38).

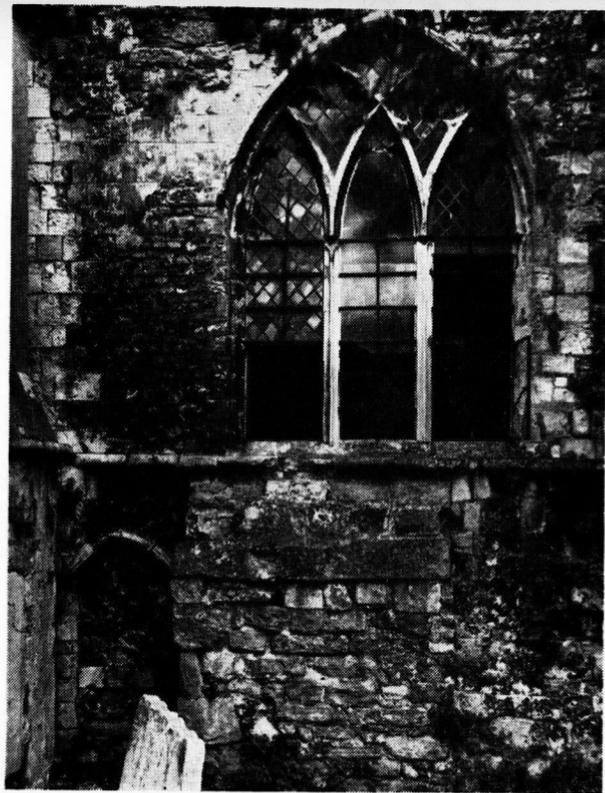


FIG. 7. Blocked priest's doorway and 14th-century window in south wall of chancel of St. Mary's, Sandwich, with projection below believed to conceal the tomb of William, Lord Clinton (page 44).



FIG. 8. Ledger slabs in centre of nave of St. Mary's, Sandwich, showing in foreground stone with Lombardic lettering and the date 1333, and behind 15th-century stone with an orle of children (page 44).

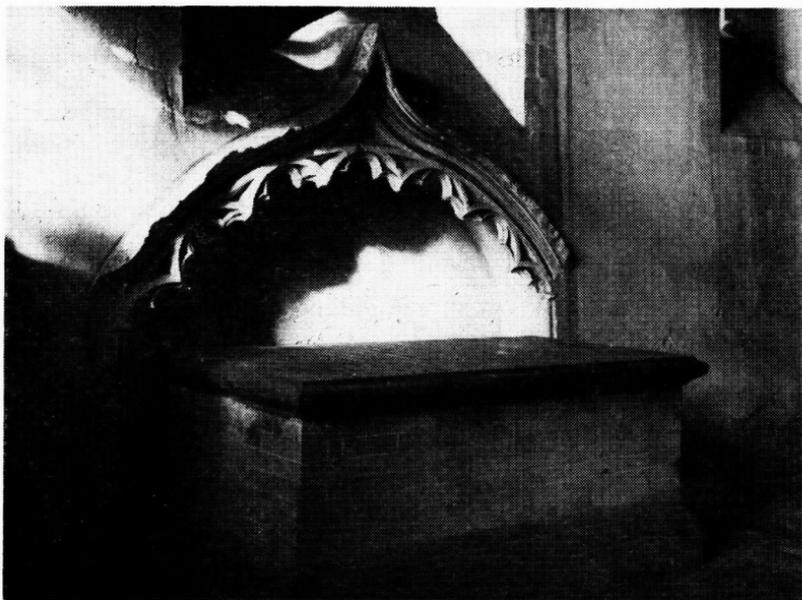


FIG. 9. Canopied tomb of Sir William Loveryk and his wife Dame Emma, early 15th century, principal restorers of St. Mary's after its sack by the French, partly concealed by the altar tomb of Joseph Jordan, died 1747 (page 46).

sack, it would be inexplicable that he does not figure in the bederoll, whereas Thomas Loveryk and his wife and Harry Loveryk are so commemorated. Thomas Loveryk, who was elected mayor of Sandwich in 1409, 1411 and 1415, is remembered with his wife for founding the Lady Chapel at the east end of the church and for giving three windows on the north side. This, like all similar references, probably refers to the gift of stained glass, and ironwork for fixing it, rather than the actual creation of windows. Any stained glass possessed in earlier days by St. Mary's probably was destroyed in the French raid. John Gylling, who was elected mayor in 1412, 1413 and 1414, is honoured with his wives for making "the north wyndow of this chyrche", and for giving £40 and 20s. yearly towards the repair of the church. Thomas Rollyng, vicar of St. Mary's 1377-1404, is remembered for meeting the cost of the west window of the church, and for providing 13s. 4d. in perpetuity for its repair. This would no doubt be the west window of the nave, still there between the Norman responds. Alexander Norman is remembered with his two wives for making "the south wyndowe and the south porche of this chyrche". The south porch as it exists to-day, with its two cusped and deeply-splayed lights, is compatible with a date *c.* 1400. Thomas Chyn and Thomas Barbar are praised with their wives for making "the procession porche". Where this stood cannot be certain, but it is distinguished from the south porch, and the present north porch was not built until modern times, though the north doorway itself is medieval; I would surmise that the procession porch stood outside the west door, which is now blocked up but whose two-centred arch can clearly be seen both on the outside and on the inside of the west wall. Owing to the rise in the external level since the church was built only the upper portion is now visible outside. A "processioun wyndow" is mentioned in the accounts.

Central towers have a habit of giving trouble and that at St. Mary's was no exception. We learn this from the churchwardens' accounts, which survive from the year 1444. The French renewed their raids on Sandwich in 1456 and among other booty they carried away a book containing the accounts of St. Mary's for twelve years or more. As it happened, Thomas Norman, who seems to have been both a warden and a chantry priest, had copies of the accounts that he and his co-warden, William Clayson, cooper, rendered to the parishioners in their five years of office, 1444-49; he copied them into a book, in which he also wrote the accounts of the years 1456 to 1464, and in 1473 he presented this book to St. Mary's. Subsequent churchwardens made

their own entries, and the first volume of the churchwardens' accounts cover the years 1444-49, 1456-64, 1495, 1496, 1500-02, 1504-19, 1521-23, 1526-31, 1542, 1545-48, 1558, 1568 and 1582.<sup>29</sup> A second volume begins in 1632 and ends in 1730. Churchwardens' accounts have long been recognized as a most valuable source for local history, but the St. Mary's accounts are of exceptional interest on account of their early date and the importance of the town at the close of the Middle Ages. When Boys studied the first volume the leaves had been newly stitched and it had been otherwise repaired so as to form a handsome book.<sup>30</sup>

From this source we learn that part of the steeple fell in 1448. It is not known exactly what damage was done, but it may be surmised that the eastern bay of the north arcade at least was destroyed, for, as already noticed, a 15th century respond still exists superimposed on the Norman base of the old respond. In the restoration the tower was apparently raised well above the Norman work and finished off with battlements and pinnacles at the four corners, the whole being surmounted by a lead-covered spire. "The mason of Christ Church", that is, Canterbury Cathedral, was frequently consulted about the progress of the work, which took several years. A sum of 8d. was paid for the carrying down of pigeon dung out of the steeple. For taking down the decrepit steeple and covering the church again Robert the carpenter received £4. Five tons of Caen stone was bought for 25s., four tons of Bere stone for 20s., and 459 feet of oaken board for 11s. 10d. For 23 iron pikes set up on the points of the crosses of the pinnacles of the steeple to prevent ravens standing thereon and soiling the steeple, or cluttering up the gutters with bones and other things, 2s. 4d. was paid. The names of some of the families who subscribed towards this great work of repair have been preserved in the accounts.

We cannot know whether it was at this time or after the earlier conflagration that £40 was given out of the estate of Robert Crystmese "unto the chaunge of these bellys", as parishioners were reminded in the bederoll. It is debatable whether the bells were rung in the central tower, contributing to its downfall, for the *Sandwich Manuscript*, which would be accurate on a point so near to its own date, asserts that Thomas Manwood, who died in 1538, was buried in the belfry near to the quire door. This Thomas Manwood, a draper, was the son of Roger Manwood, who in 1507 gave a piece of land to provide out of the rent thereof for the repair of "all the west windows . . . both within and

<sup>29</sup> This is now deposited on loan with the Cathedral Library at Canterbury.

<sup>30</sup> The titbits that he extracted from it are reproduced in Boys, pp. 359-66.

withowtt",<sup>31</sup> thereby supplementing Thomas Rollyng's benefaction; he was elected mayor in 1517 and 1526, was one of the barons of Parliament for the town in 1523, and supported the canopy at the coronation of Queen Ann Boleyn in 1533. Roger Manwood died in 1534, and he and his family were commemorated by a ledger stone in St. Mary's which had been "reft of its brazen ornaments" even before the time of Boys.<sup>32</sup> The statement about Thomas Manwood's grave opens the possibility that the medieval St. Mary's had a belfry adjoining the chancel. There are blocked medieval doorways on the north and south sides of the chancel near to the chancel steps. Though the space available is not large, it is easy to imagine a belfry in the angle between the chancel and the north aisle with access from the chancel through one of these blocked doorways; the south doorway would then be a priest's entrance to the chancel as was very common. But Mr. Torr prefers to understand "in the belfry" as meaning "under the belfry", i.e., under the central tower near the entrance to the chancel.

The font is 15th century workmanship and probably dates from the restoration of 1458. The bowl is octagonal, and the faces are charged alternately with plain shields and roses in quatrefoils. On the shaft it now bears the date 1662 with a number of initials not easy to decipher, but this must refer to a replacement after the troubles of the Commonwealth; that it had been moved is shown by the fact that among the stones on which it rests is a fragment of a tombstone inscribed *Hic requie . . . Warson . . . ille 12 oc . . . 1613 obiit . . . vixit aetat. . .*

The 15th century was marked by the almost universal introduction of rood lofts where they did not exist before and the widespread introduction of organs. St. Mary's shared in the general fashion. In 1447 the churchwardens acknowledged the receipt from John Stokker's "loove" (i.e. widow) of £10 and from R.D. of £5 towards the making of the new roodloft; the item of 2od. "for mendyng ye John of ye crosse, for sylver & gyldyng" which puzzled Boys<sup>33</sup>—he would like to have emended "John" to "iron"—refers to the figure of St. John on the roodloft. The wardens acknowledged the receipt from the executor of Thomas Boryner (= Bourner) of £4 for a pair of organs and they received 6s. 8d. for the old organs over St. John's chancel—

<sup>31</sup> See Boys, p. 377.

<sup>32</sup> Boys, p. 323. It must be this Roger Manwood rather than his even more famous grandson, Sir Roger Manwood (1525-92), founder of the Grammar School, who was so commemorated, for Sir Roger was buried at Hackington with a splendid monument and had no special connection with St. Mary's. The ledger stone, according to Boys, was moved to the chancel from the St. Lawrence chancel.

<sup>33</sup> Boys, p. 363, n.

though whether this is for their repair or disposal is not clear. Alms amounting to £4 12s. 6d. were recorded for "ye tabyll of alabastyr at ye hygh auter"—presumably a retable—and £9 was paid in London for such a table. A clock for the church was made by Scalon of Wingham in 1464 for 12s.

Images of the saints there would be in plenty in the 15th century, though we know specifically only of an image of St. John the Evangelist in alabaster and one of our Lady carried in procession. A charming entry in the accounts tells us that an earlier Thomas Manwood acknowledged to having in his hands the last time our Lady was borne in 1431 the sum of 2s., out of which he had paid 12d. for the re-making of her arms and hands, leaving him 12d. still to the good.

One precious monument has survived from the 15th century, recognizable as such by its style, for there is no clue to the identity of the persons buried under it. This is in the centre of the nave, adjoining the dated slab with the Lombardic lettering, and it is remarkable for showing an orle of 12 children around their parents. The brasses which would have filled the indents have alas! long since disappeared, like all the brasses with which the floor of St. Mary's must once have gleamed. In the same group of floor memorials there is a small indent of the 15th century apparently showing a priest in academical or canonical dress, or possibly some lady.

There are five other medieval features in St. Mary's, that cannot be exactly dated and may be mentioned here. One is an undecorated niche in the east wall; as this end of the church has been reconstructed it may have come from elsewhere, and could be a piscina, especially as no other piscina is to be seen in the building. There is a square recess (? an aumbry) in the north wall of the chancel near the chancel steps. Near this place there is a curious and rare example of the use of bones for dowelling; the mason may have had justifiable fears about the effect of damp on iron dowels. Two small areas of medieval tiling may be noticed near the chancel steps and at the east end of the south aisle. Lastly, there is the venerable coffer known as the Peter's Pence Box. It has metal straps and three locks, so that it could be opened only by the incumbent and both churchwardens jointly. About 1953, when St. Mary's fell into temporary disuse, it was removed to St. Clement's, but in 1959 it was returned. It stands on some medieval stonework, hardly designed for this purpose but not now identifiable. Peter's Pence was the name given to an annual tax of a penny from each householder having land of a certain value to the support of the Roman *curia*, but the chest may well have been used

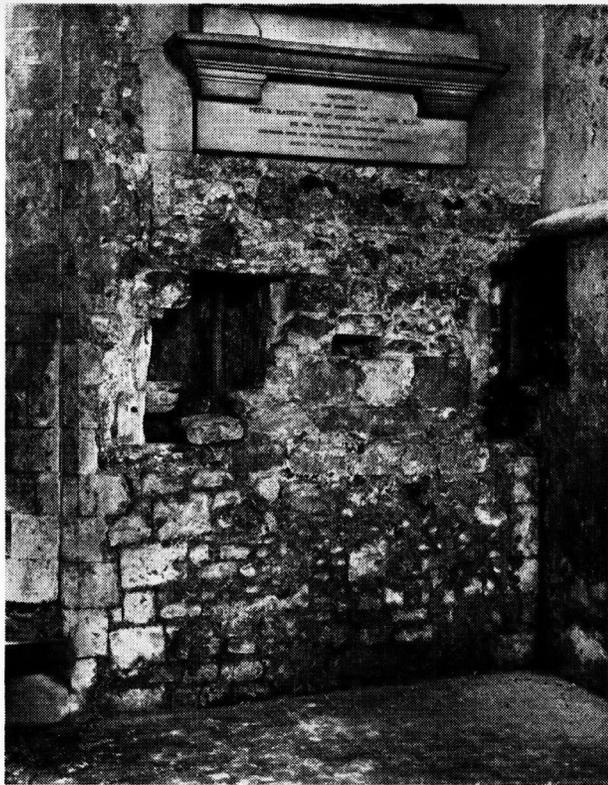


FIG. 10. Traces of stone reredos of former St. Lawrence's chancel terminating the south aisle of St. Mary's, Sandwich (page 55).



FIG. 11. 15th-century font of St. Mary's, Sandwich, showing behind Norman west respond of south arcade (page 51).

for many other purposes besides the receipt of these contributions.

The second half of the 15th century was the most glorious in the history of St. Mary's. The haven had not yet silted up, and Sandwich was still among the first ports of the kingdom, taking royal visits as a matter of course. Devotion to the Mother of the Lord was at its height, and gifts were showered upon St. Mary's. Covetous eyes had not yet been cast upon the possessions of the church, and relics were not yet regarded as superstitious. The wealth of St. Mary's at this time is shown by an inventory of plate, vestments, books and other treasures drawn up by Thomas Norman in 1473.<sup>34</sup> We there read of silver crosses, chalices, cruets, basons, censers, ships (i.e. "boats" for the incense), candlesticks, cups, bells, reliquaries, crowns, a pax brede, a chrysmatory, and so on amounting to 724 ounces. We read of the "stondyng of seynt Brydys hert of sylver, iiij pynaclis that wayyth xvij ounces"; this was a re-fashioned relic, for in the accounts of 1444 the churchwardens record that they bought 6 oz. of silver to perform the making of the relic of St. Bride's (= Bridget's) heart above the weight of the old shrine;<sup>35</sup> until the Reformation as we have noted, this relic occupied the tall recess in the north wall of the chancel. It would be pleasant to know more about "seynt Edmond's knyff of beralle". The "monstrant for to bere yn the sacrament on corpus Christi day yn processyon" will be the monstrance for which Harry Loveryk earned the prayers of the faithful in the bederoll. The vestments must have made a brave sight especially the chasuble of red and blue velvet powdered with lions and fleurs-de-lis of the king's arms—one of many proofs that the portrayal of the Royal Arms in churches preceded the Reformation—while the "lytyll chesebyll for seynt Nicholas bysschop" brings before our eyes the rite of the boy bishop. The antiphonaries, the grayells (graduals), the lectionaries, the martyr-ologies and the portases (portable breviaries) "for chyl dren to lerne on" explain the background of the Book of Common Prayer. Mention of the organ books that Thomas Norman presented tells us, as we should have expected, that the organs were in the roodloft.

A big difference between the life of a parish church then and now was the presence of chantries each served by its own priest independent of the incumbent and separately endowed. There were also brotherhoods, whose members were bound to pray for each other and for the souls of departed members, and these had their own chapels or altars

<sup>34</sup> Reproduced in Boys, pp. 374-77.

<sup>35</sup> See Boys, p. 363.

and were separately endowed. Not infrequently there were hermits or anchorites living in a cell or chapel against the church.

At St. Mary's in the second half of the 15th century, apart from the high altar in the high chancel or high choir, before which there perpetually burnt lamps endowed by pious Sandwegians,<sup>36</sup> we read of our Lady's altar, St. John's chancel, altar and chapel, St. Christopher's altar, St. James's altar and chapel, St. Lawrence's chancel and altar, the Jesus altar and mass, the morn mass altar, and St. Ursula's altar. Our Lady's altar would be that in the Lady Chapel at the east end of the church founded by Thomas Loveryk, as we are told in the bederoll. Did the church then extend farther east than it does now? There is not much space available between the present east end and the river Stour, as the road to Canterbury always ran that way, and that is held to be the reason why the present chancel is short in relation to its breadth. One of these altars would have been in the chantry founded by John and William Countdy, and it contained the morn-mass altar, as we have noted, but we cannot identify it more precisely. It is probable that the Jesus altar was that used by the Jesus brotherhood, of which we read in a document of 1561 as being lately dissolved;<sup>37</sup> the quay opposite St. Mary's was known as the Jesus quay. It is believed that St. Lawrence's chancel terminated the south aisle, and at the end of the present south aisle, where some of the stonework has been unpicked, may be seen traces of a stone reredos;<sup>38</sup> it would be worthwhile to complete this work, but it would mean removing to another position the fine large memorial to Peter Rainier, Admiral of the Blue, which has surmounted it since his death in 1808. Above Peter Rainier's monument can be seen the top of the blocked medieval window already noted, and, as we have also seen, the ledger stone in memory of Roger Manwood was originally in the St. Lawrence chancel though later moved to the chancel.

The bederoll tells us of a hermit named Harry Cambrig; unlike most hermits, who depended on charity for their means of existence, he must have been a man of substance, for the bederoll records that he gave to St. Mary's a chalice weighing 16 oz. According to the

<sup>36</sup> See Boys, p. 380, Items 33, 35 and 36 for the endowment of such lamps by Thomas Marleburgh in 1463, John Warre in 1463 and Robert Philipp and John Reede in 1427.

<sup>37</sup> Boys, p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> The stonework had already been unpicked when Chichester wrote in 1883, *loc. cit.*, p. 343. It is possible, however, that the St. Lawrence altar terminating the south aisle was not this one but would have been in the southern half of the present chancel against the east wall; the line of the old south arcade almost divides the present chancel into two equal parts.

*Sandwich Manuscript*, an anchoress had her cell at the east end of the church in 1528.

To complete the account of St. Mary's at the close of the Middle Ages mention must be made of the chapel of St. Jacob or St. James which stood in the parish a little to the south-west of the church. The brotherhood of St. Catherine, which had women<sup>39</sup> as well as men among its members, used this chapel. By the will of John Wynchelse the fraternity was given in 1416 an enclosed garden in Dreggerenlane for its improvement and support, and in the same year this was conveyed by the wardens of the brotherhood to Walter Daniel for 2s. 8d. a year. The generous Thomas Rollyng, vicar of St. Mary's, had willed to the brethren 8s. a year, and in 1426 on account of non-payment they seized a messuage in the parish on which it was charged and leased it for 4s. a year. Another enclosed garden in Dreggerenlane brought in 4s. a year from 1478.<sup>40</sup>

It would appear from Thomas Norman's accounts and the Corporation records that the chapel was under the management of the officers of St. Mary's, who paid for its repair in 1445 and 1478.<sup>41</sup>

At the south-west corner of the chapel was a hermitage. The duties of the hermit, according to the *Sandwich Manuscript*, were to minister to the strangers and poor, to bury the dead and to pray for the people. There was a cemetery attached which was still used occasionally as a burial place in the time of Boys. The accounts refer to "Sir William the hermit in St. James's churchyard". The last hermit was John Steward, who became vicar of St. Mary's in 1553. The author of the *Sandwich Manuscript* claims to have seen him as a hermit in 1528.

John Steward must have found the parsonage house much more comfortable than his hermitage. It is a good 14th century house, still standing, though long since in secular ownership, in Vicarage Lane, formerly called St. Mary's Lane. The bederoll reminded parishioners until the days of Edward VI that Thomas Rollyng made the vicarage more than it was unto the honour of them that should be vicars after him.

<sup>39</sup> See Boys, p. 380, Item 31. It is called the sisterhood of Katherine in one of the deeds in the possession of the Corporation. See Boys, p. 187, *n*.

<sup>40</sup> See Boys, pp. 379-80, Items 28-31.

<sup>41</sup> Boys, pp. 328, 363.