

Early Kentish Churches¹

By SIR ERIC FLETCHER

THE word 'early' in this context, like the word 'medieval', requires explanation. I propose to deal almost exclusively with those Kentish churches which either were built in the first part of the 7th century, or, if built before that time, were then re-adapted for use. This is convenient for two reasons. In the first place, it enables me to register my protest against the thought that pre-conquest architecture can be studied as if it has some organic unity—some thread of continuity running through it. The reverse is the case. The span of time between the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the Norman conquest is longer than the interval between the building of Henry VII's chapel and to-day. There is as little correspondence between the Augustinian churches in Kent, and, shall we say, Earls Barton or Sompting, as there is between a Wren church and Coventry Cathedral. There is however this difference. St. Paul's or Coventry can be appreciated without reference to the other. Questions of derivation, influence, trend and provenance do not arise. On the other hand, the study of pre-conquest architecture, whether of the 7th, 9th or 11th centuries, involves some knowledge of all three periods and of continental prototypes. It is the exception, rather than the rule, for any pre-conquest church to be precisely dated from literary evidence.

In general, the date of an Anglo-Saxon church has to be determined by reference to constructional characteristics. Put briefly, the method adopted is to proceed backwards. The characteristics of a Norman church, whether built in Norman England or in Normandy, are well known. All later types are identifiable. If a church contains no Norman or later features, it is safe to claim that it was built before the conquest. If, for example, an early Norman arcade pierces a nave wall, the fabric is almost certain to be Anglo-Saxon. Certain definite features of Anglo-Saxon workmanship—not found in Norman churches—are now established. They include 'long-and-short' quoins, pilaster strips, double-splayed windows, mid-wall shafts, through-stones, hood-moulds, triangular-headed doorways and windows, western towers of the distinctive Lincoln type, relatively thin walls, and high naves. All, or nearly all, of these characteristics first appeared *after* the end of the 7th century. Paradoxical though it may seem, it has become a canon of interpretation that a 7th-century church in England, not identifiable by literary evidence, is recognized by the absence of normal Saxon characteristics. This has been the case at Brixworth, Wing, Bradford-on-Avon, Deerhurst, Bishopstone, and possibly at South Elmham and some of the Shropshire churches.

The second reason for confining this paper to 7th-century churches is that the county of Kent is not noticeably instructive for the study of Anglo-Saxon

¹ This paper was read at the Society's 7th annual conference at Canterbury on 4 April, 1964. All the figures are drawn to the scale of approximately 20 ft. to 1 in.

architecture in general. Kent does not contain the variety of surviving monuments to be found, for example, in Sussex, Hampshire, Northamptonshire or Northumbria. Kent is singularly lacking in churches that exhibit some of the best known Anglo-Saxon characteristics. For example, there is no long-and-short work in Kent as at Earls Barton; there are no pilaster-strips as at Barnack; no western towers as in Lincolnshire and East Anglia; no chancel arch as at Wittering; no western arch as at St. Benet's, Cambridge; no mid-wall shafts; no triangular-headed doorways, as at Holy Trinity, Colchester. There are indeed a few double-splayed windows as at Swanscombe and Whitfield. Whitfield is about the only surviving example of the typical nave-and-chancel church of the late pre-conquest period and has a double-splayed window in the west wall, as well as one over the south porch. St. Mildred's in Canterbury contains some remarkable, big stone quoins of the mid 11th century, similar to those at St. Mary in the Castle, Dover. At St. Mary, Dover, the south doorway in the south wall is constructed in the style generally known as Escomb-jamb technique, but as far as I know, it is the only surviving example of the kind in Kent.

Although Kent is thus limited in the contributions it makes to our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon characteristics, it compensates by providing a group of churches which, while not relevant to the subsequent development of Anglo-Saxon building in general, are of outstanding interest for the study of Christian architecture in the 7th century, and for the historical problems associated with the missions of Augustine and his immediate successors.

The essential historical background is well known. Bede tells us² that on the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 there were in Canterbury alone at least two churches surviving from the times of Roman occupation, one within and one without the Roman city walls. St. Martin's, the one outside the city, still stands, and proudly claims to be the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion. It was here that Bishop Liudhard was celebrating Christian rites as Queen Bertha's chaplain. It was here that King Ethelbert allowed Augustine and his companions to meet, to sing, to pray, to say mass, to preach and to baptize. The church, as we see it to-day, consists of a square western tower, a nave, and a long square-ended chancel. Both the nave and the western part of the chancel are of pre-conquest date. This is not the occasion to examine in detail the evidence produced over 60 years ago by Canon Routledge³ suggesting that the western part of the chancel represents part of the original Romano-British church. The entire structure of this historic monument is overdue for a detailed reappraisal in the light of modern knowledge. Recent excavations recorded by Mr. Frank Jenkins are reported elsewhere in this volume.⁴

The other church still standing in Canterbury in 597 and built by 'the ancient Roman Christians' occupied the site of the present cathedral. This was repaired by Augustine and consecrated as his episcopal seat, probably in 603. It underwent considerable transformation during the Anglo-Saxon period, but all traces of it

² Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1, 26 and 33.

³ C. F. Routledge, *St. Martin's, Canterbury* (1898).

⁴ Pp. 11-15.

were swept away by a conflagration in 1067. Various attempts have been made, notably by Professor Willis,⁵ based on Edmer's literary records of the 12th century, to describe the plan and details of this church as it existed, both in Roman times and after Augustine's restoration. These attempted reconstructions, however, remain largely conjectural and controversial, and should be treated with reserve.⁶

A third building which may have been standing at the time of Augustine's arrival, either as a disused church or as a pagan temple, was St. Pancras, Canterbury, still to be seen in ruins, and described below.

There were, no doubt, in other parts of Kent Roman Christian churches that had survived the heathen invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries. Bede tells us⁷ that after Ethelbert's conversion the missionaries were allowed to build and *repair* churches in all places. It has been suggested as a bare possibility that the structure now incorporated in the north-west part of the parish church of Lydd, near Dungeness, is a survival from Roman or sub-Roman times. This remarkable monument belongs in any case to the earliest days of English Christianity.⁸ The surviving walls, both externally and internally, combined with excavations undertaken by the late Canon Livett,⁹ enable one to reconstruct the plan of the original building (FIG. 5). There is no literary evidence to help to decide the date of construction. It is chiefly remarkable because of its basilican shape. There are very few surviving pre-conquest basilicas of any size in England. Those that are known, like Brixworth and Wing and Wilfrid's churches, were all very much larger. Lydd is unique in being the only surviving pre-conquest basilica of its own size in England. Sir Alfred Clapham thought¹⁰ that the presence of a double-splayed window was 'almost conclusive evidence of a late Saxon date', but close examination shows that this window has been altered and was originally single-splayed. Mr. Dudley Jackson has also pointed out that there are a number of impost profiles and other constructional similarities between the first rebuilding of St. Martin's, Canterbury, and the present Saxon work at Lydd. In particular, the high western archway at Lydd invites comparison with the blocked archway in the west wall of St. Martin's. It can confidently be asserted that the Lydd basilica is not later than the early part of the 8th century.

Leaving aside Lydd and St. Martin's, I want to turn to the group of six 7th-century churches in Kent, for all of which literary evidence enables us to fix a precise date. They form a remarkably homogeneous group with remarkable similarities of plan, construction and arrangement. They are (1) St. Augustine's, Canterbury, (2) St. Mary, Canterbury, (3) St. Pancras, Canterbury, (4) St. Andrew, Rochester, (5) St. Mary, Lyminge, and (6) St. Mary, Reculver.

St. Augustine's is the monastic church, originally dedicated to St. Peter and

⁵ R. Willis, *Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* (1845); see also Sir W. St. J. Hope, 'The plan and arrangement of the first cathedral church of Canterbury,' *Proc. Soc. Antiq. London*, 2 ser., xxx (1917-18), 137.

⁶ Cf. G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts of Early England*, II (1925), 'Anglo-Saxon Architecture,' p. 77, and A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest* (1930), p. 86.

⁷ Bede, *H.E.*, I, 26.

⁸ For a detailed analysis see E. D. C. Jackson and E. G. M. Fletcher, 'The pre-conquest basilica at Lydd,' *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, 3 ser., xxii (1959), 41.

⁹ *Archaeol. J.*, LXXVIII (1921), 216; *Archaeol. Cantiana*, xxxvii (1925), 177.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* in note 6, p. 114.

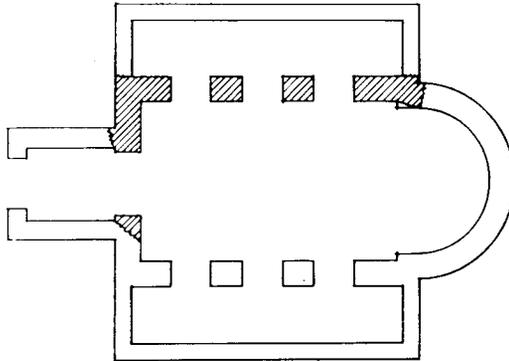


FIG. 5

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, LYDD, KENT (p. 18)

Conjectural plan, with existing walls shaded, of early Saxon basilican church incorporated in NW. angle of N. aisle of present medieval church

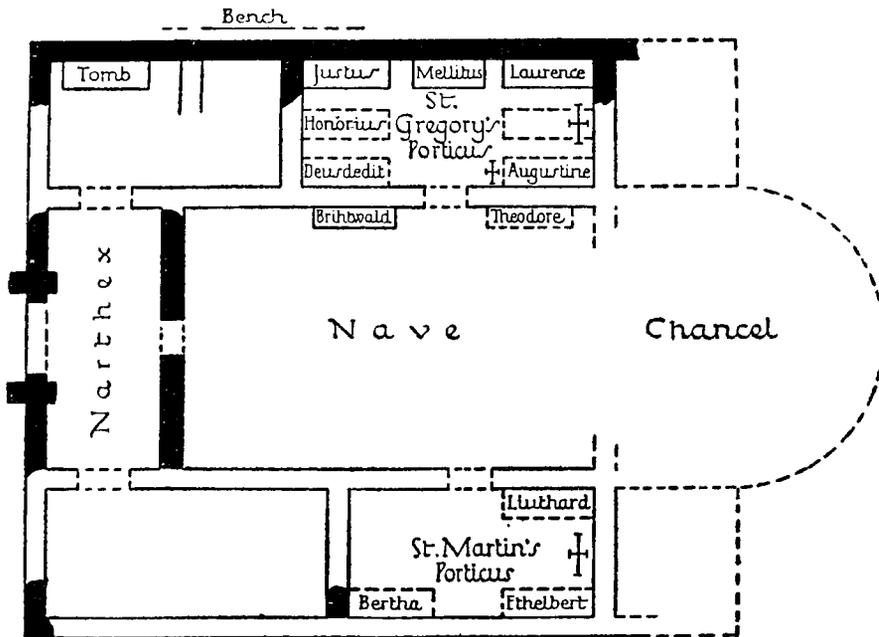


FIG. 6

CANTERBURY, KENT

Plan of St. Augustine's Abbey church (p. 20)
(after Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 6, fig. 6)

St. Paul, founded by St. Augustine in 598, and consecrated by his successor Laurentius in 604. As a result of the extensive excavations carried out by Sir Charles Peers and Sir Alfred Clapham from 1900 onwards the full story of this important monument has been revealed,¹¹ and the plan of the original 7th-century church is known (FIG. 6). The nave was flanked on either side by porticus or chapels 12 ft. wide. We know from Bede¹² that the north-east porticus was dedicated to St. Gregory and contained the tombs of St. Augustine and his immediate successors in the see of Canterbury, and that the south-east porticus contained the tombs of King Ethelbert, Bertha his wife, and others. Two tombs in the body of the church adjoining the porticus of St. Gregory contained the bodies of archbishops Theodore and Brihtwald. The eastern termination of the church was entirely destroyed, but the northern wall of St. Gregory's porticus continued a sufficient distance eastwards to show that some other portion of the church adjoined the porticus on the east. The side walls of the body of the church were also destroyed, but the literary evidence, by speaking of a doorway opening into St. Gregory's porticus, shows that walls as distinct from an arcade separated the porticus from the body of the church.¹³ The walls are almost entirely of Roman brick, 2 ft. thick, and have square buttresses flanking the western entrance.

As far as we know, this was the only monastery actually founded by St. Augustine or his mission. Augustine himself had been professed in Gregory's monastery on the *Clivus Scauri*, on the Caelian hill in Rome. We may reasonably suppose that the Benedictine rule was observed at St. Augustine's, and that in that sense it may be regarded as the first Benedictine house in England.

A few yards to the east of St. Augustine's (then St. Peter and St. Paul) stood St. Mary's (FIG. 7). This was founded about 620 by Edbald, the son and successor of King Ethelbert. All that survives to-day is the west wall built of Roman brick, with a central doorway having a shallow external rebate on each jamb. The internal width of the nave is only a little less than that of St. Augustine's. We know from literary evidence that it was surrounded by porticus. This suggests that it had a narthex at the west, and chambers on the north and south. The plan of St. Mary's was probably very much like that of St. Augustine's Abbey church.

More imposing, and more important, are the ruins of St. Pancras, which stand some 260 ft. east of St. Mary's. This is built of Roman brick in a pebbly mortar. The walls are 1 ft. 10 in. thick. As originally planned (FIG. 8), it consisted of a nave, 42 ft. by 26 ft., with a chancel formed of a stilted apse and separated from the nave by an arcade of three arches resting on four Roman columns.¹⁴ The surviving remains of the apse are so small that it is impossible to say whether the external face was curved or polygonal. There are brick buttresses at the springing of the apse and at the four angles of the nave. The west door of the nave opens into a west porch or porticus, which was added when the building was in course of construction. Near the middle of the south side of the nave there is a chamber or porticus

¹¹ C. R. Peers and A. W. Clapham in *Archaeologia*, LXXVII (1927), 201 ff.

¹² Bede, *H.E.*, I, 33.

¹³ Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 6, p. 19.

¹⁴ Peers and Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 11, p. 205.



FIG. 7
 CANTERBURY, KENT
 Plan of St. Mary's Church (p. 20)
 (after Clapham, *St. Augustine's Abbey* (M.O.W. guide, 1955 ed.)

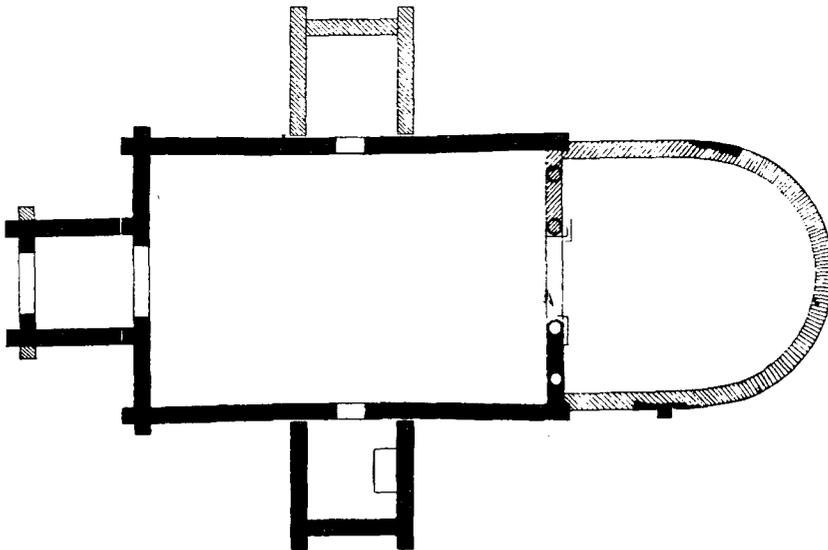


FIG. 8
 CANTERBURY, KENT
 Plan of church of St. Pancras (pp. 20, 22)
 (after Baldwin Brown, *op. cit.* in note 6, fig. 43)

of the same internal dimensions as the west porch. We know that this was added after the nave was completed because the walls of the porticus are separated from the main walls. It has always been assumed that a similar porticus existed on the north side of the nave. This has recently been confirmed by excavations conducted by Mr. A. D. Saunders, who informs me that the dimensions of the north porticus would appear to be practically the same as that on the south. There are also some indications that there was originally an adjunct on the south side of the nave at the eastern end overlapping the apse.

There is no contemporary evidence to determine the date of St. Pancras. It is not mentioned by Bede. The first literary reference occurs in the 14th-century chronicle of William Thorn, a monk in the monastery of St. Augustine's. He tells us that this building was originally a pagan temple used by King Ethelbert, and that St. Augustine purged the temple of its impurities and changed it into a church consecrated in honour of St. Pancras. Thorn's statement, late though it is, is not inherently improbable, and may well have been based on long tradition. We know that from the 4th century onwards throughout the empire many pagan temples were taken over by the Church; and this although they were architecturally quite unsuited for the liturgical needs of Christian worship. This custom certainly persisted in Rome itself at least well into the 7th century.¹⁵ Conspicuous examples in Rome are the Pantheon and S. Maria Antiqua (in the Forum). At S. Clemente the building in which the early Christians met was separated by only a narrow lane from a pagan house where the Mithraic cult was practised. After the triumph of the church the *titulus Clementis* was extended by an apse to enclose the former Mithraic temple. At S. Maria in Via Lata, which occupies the site of an earlier Roman building, a pagan altar is still preserved. There are numerous examples from Greece of pagan temples being converted to Christian use. Pope Gregory, indeed, expressly countenanced and encouraged his English missionaries to convert pagan temples into churches.¹⁶ There is nothing intrinsically incongruous in such a practice. In our own day the present Orthodox church at Kavalla (formerly Neapolis) near Philippi was until recently a mosque.

But one cannot be certain about the origin of St. Pancras. Baldwin Brown¹⁷ dismissed Thorn's notion that it was originally a pagan shrine as 'a medieval guess', founded on the presence of the antique Roman columns, or portions of them, to be seen as part of the fabric at the east end of the nave. It is certainly a coincidence for a pre-existing pagan temple to be on the same axis on which the cathedral church, the monastic church, and St. Mary's were built. On the other hand, the architectural evidence indicates that the three porticus on the west, south and north are later additions to the original structure; and this suggests that they may be Augustinian or post-Augustinian additions to a pre-existing building.

The fourth church to mention is St. Andrew, Rochester (FIG. 9), founded

¹⁵ Cf. Michael Gough, *The Early Christians* (1961), p. 130.

¹⁶ Bede, *H.E.*, I, 30.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* in note 6, p. 86.

by King Ethelbert in 604. The remains of the church uncovered in 1889¹⁸ are so similar to the Canterbury churches as to raise a distinct probability that they are the remains of Ethelbert's foundation. There was an aisleless nave with an elliptical apse and a sleeper wall across its entrance, probably to carry a triple arcade, as at

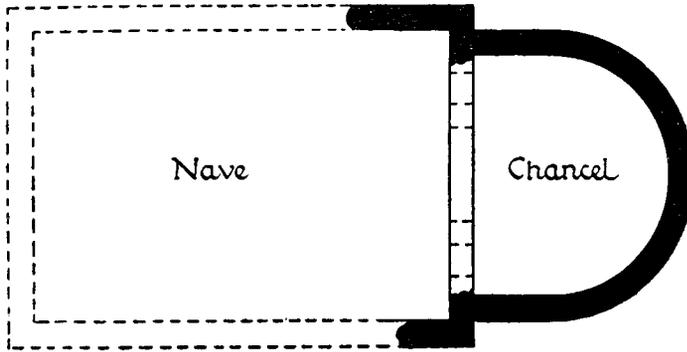


FIG. 9

ROCHESTER, KENT

Plan of St. Andrew's Church (p. 22 f.)
(after Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 6, fig. 7)

St. Pancras. The excavations left it uncertain whether originally the church possessed any, and, if so, what adjuncts. There was, however, subsequently at least one lateral porticus, for Bede records¹⁹ that in 726 Bishop Tobias was buried in a porticus which he had himself made on the north side of the church.

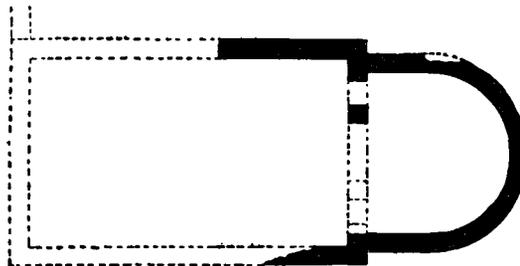


FIG. 10

LYMINGE, KENT

Plan of St. Mary's Church (p. 24)

Augustine's mission, successful though it was in its initial stages, soon began to suffer from lack of adequate manpower to carry out an effectual crusade. In 601 he received welcome reinforcements from Rome, including Paulinus. In 625

¹⁸ Discussed and illustrated by Canon Livett and Sir. Wm. St. J. Hope, *Archaeol. Cantiana*, xviii (1889) and xxiii (1898).

¹⁹ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 23.

Paulinus accompanied Ethelburga, the sister of Edbald and daughter of Ethelbert, to Northumbria on the occasion of her marriage to the heathen King Edwin. After Edwin's defeat at Hatfield Chase in 633, Ethelburga, again accompanied by Paulinus, returned to Kent. Paulinus became bishop of Rochester, and Ethelburga founded the monastery of Lyminge, the first of those religious houses for women which were to play so notable a part in the social, ecclesiastical and administrative affairs of England during the 7th century. It is reasonable to assume that Ethelburga's foundation, the prototype of the double-monastery which was to flourish at Whitby, Bardney, Ely, Much Wenlock, Coldingham and elsewhere, included within its walls both a church for the nuns and a church for the monks. The foundations of one of these churches (FIG. 10) are to be seen immediately to the south of the present Norman parish church of St. Mary, Lyminge. Excavated about 1875, they show the foundations of an apse separated from the body of the church by a triple arcade. The walls are of Roman brick and rubble. There appears to have been a porticus entered through a doorway at the west end of the north wall of the apse, and Goscelin in the 12th century records that this is where Ethelburga herself was buried.

Finally we come, but after a significant interval of some 36 years, to the church of St. Mary, Reculver (FIG. 11). This is dated 669 by an entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The remains of this church, pulled down in 1805, were uncovered in 1926-7, and the plan is preserved on the site. As originally built²⁰ it consisted of a nave, 37½ ft. by 24 ft., with an apsidal chancel, round within and polygonal without and entered by a triple arcade resting on two stone columns. There is still preserved (in the north wall) a very fine specimen of a 7th-century single-splayed window. A pair of porticus overlapping chancel and nave were entered by doorways east of the arcade. At a date not very far removed from the original foundation a series of porticus, including a west porch, were added against the remaining parts of the nave walls. Around the inside of the apse are the remains of a stone bench, for seating the clergy—a feature very common in Syria and elsewhere in the east. One of the stone columns forming the triple arcade is now preserved in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral.

If we now consider the distinguishing characteristics of this group of six Kentish churches built between 597 and 669, we note in the first place they are all relatively small. None could have accommodated more than a handful of worshippers at one time. They were missionary churches, or in the cases of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, and Lyminge, built for a small monastic community. Their structure was plain, though of competent workmanship. With the possible exception of Reculver they were built entirely by architects and masons who accompanied St. Augustine, or followed shortly after. The contemporary Anglo-Saxons in Kent (as elsewhere) had no knowledge or experience of building other than in timber. Certain architectural features are common to all these six churches. They all have an eastern apse, and in each the curve of the apse is slightly stilted. Where the evidence has been made available, i.e. at St. Pancras, Lyminge and Reculver, the entrance to the chancel was through a triple arcade, and it is highly probable

²⁰ Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 6, p. 22.

that a similar pattern was followed at St. Augustine's and St. Mary, Canterbury, and at Rochester. This was no doubt an easier form of construction than a wide

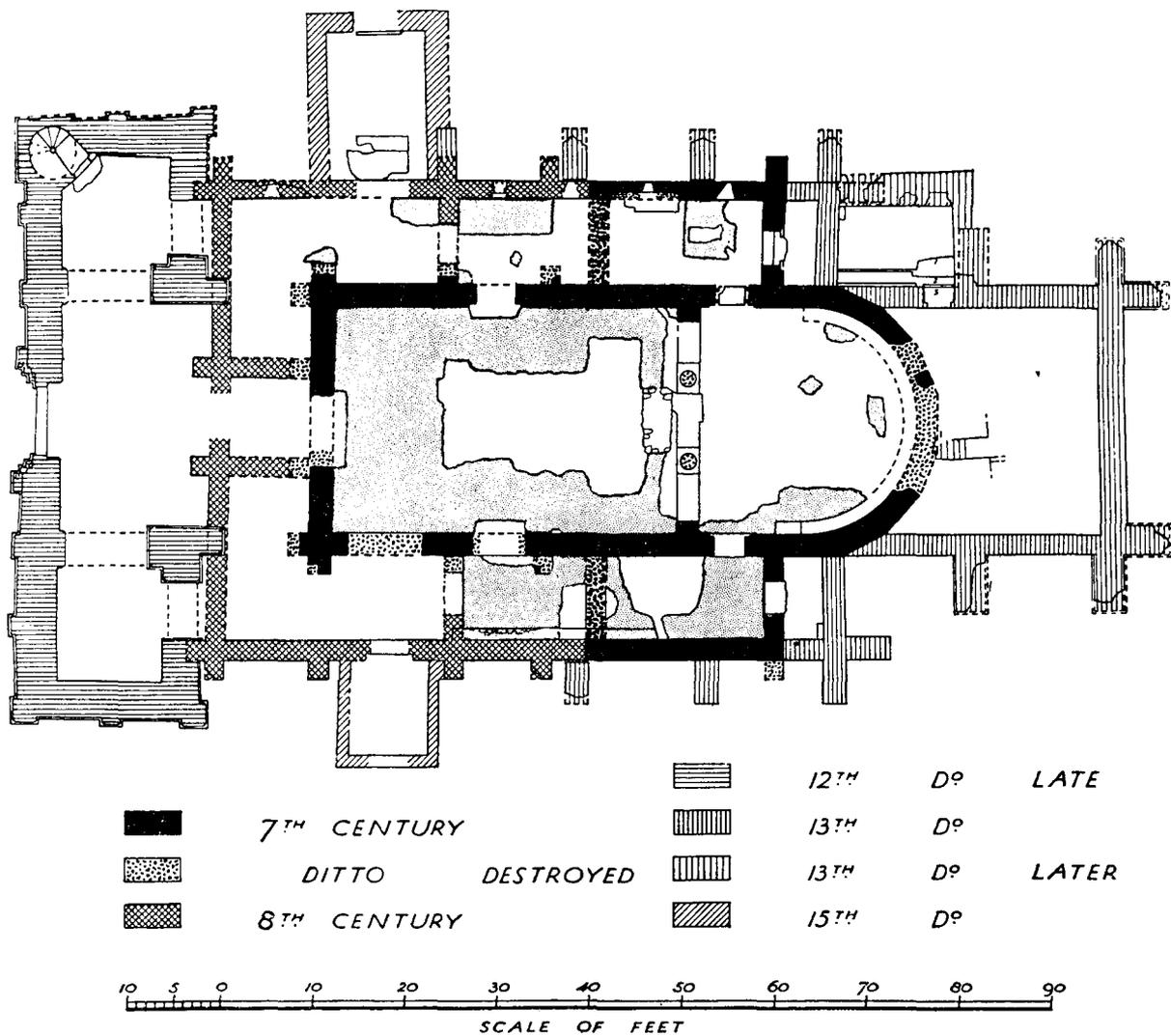


FIG. 11
 RECVLVER, KENT
 Plan of St. Mary's Church (p. 24)
 (after Peers and Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 11, fig. 4)

chancel arch, which may have been beyond the capacity of the builders of these Kentish churches.

We may safely assume from the custom prevailing elsewhere, as from the architectural arrangements, that the Canterbury missionaries used a small free-

standing cube-shaped altar placed on the chord of the apse or slightly within the arch of the apse. We cannot tell whether or not in the Kentish churches the altar was protected and sheltered by a canopy, supported on columns, called the *ciborium*. This was common throughout Christendom. The *ciborium* served to give dignity to a small, low altar, and to enable it to be veiled by curtains when not in use. As Professor Deanesly has observed,²¹ it is unlikely that the *ciborium* was used in the Kentish churches. The entrances into the chancel through the narrow arches of a triple arcade would have rendered it unnecessary if the altar were on the chord of the apse. If the altar were to the east of the chord the triple arcade would have served effectively as a kind of screen. It is clear from Pope Gregory's correspondence that the relics he sent to Augustine were buried at the foot of the altar or enclosed within it. In the 7th century, and indeed till much later, no church could be consecrated unless it contained relics of some kind in or under the altar.

But the most striking and remarkable feature of this whole group of six 7th-century Kentish churches is the provision in all of them of one or more lateral adjuncts or porticus. This feature is without parallel in western Europe, and differentiates our Kentish churches from architectural construction elsewhere.

The tradition of Celtic Christianity was a square-ended nave and chancel, with a narrow division between the two. The tradition in Rome, and throughout the empire, both in the east and in the west, was the Christian basilica, consisting of an *atrium*, a monumental nave flanked by longitudinal colonnades, often leading to a *martyrium* or *confessio*, and terminating in an eastern apse. This was the normal type of Constantinian and post-Constantinian basilica, despite its many variations in detail, with which Augustine and his associates were familiar when they set out from Rome. In the Canterbury churches there is no attempt to copy any of the ambitious Roman models, as, for example, occurred two generations later with Wilfrid's elaborate designs at Hexham, Ripon and elsewhere, with his crypts and two-storied buildings, with long walls and wonderful columns, and winding passages with spiral stairs.²²

The explanation is not far to seek. Augustine was not a particularly imaginative or enthusiastic missionary. He had a precarious foothold in a mainly heathen and barbarous land. He had neither the ambition, nor the means, nor the use for spectacular buildings. He and his companions had to be severely practical. Moreover, the state of art and architecture in Rome itself was neither inspiring nor encouraging at the end of the 6th century. The glories of classical Rome and their aqueducts were in ruins. There was no stable civil government. No public buildings were being erected. The great basilicas of Constantine were standing, but, with the possible exception of S. Giovanni by the Latin Gate, not a single new church appears to have been built in Rome in the 6th century, or the early part of the 7th. Even Pope Honorius I (625-638), who is credited with extensive activity in beautifying and restoring many churches in Rome, did not inspire any new building.

²¹ M. Deanesly, *The Pre-Conquest Church in England* (1961), p. 143.

²² Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, ch. 22 (trans. B. Colgrave, in *Historians of the Church of York*, Rolls Series, no. 71, 1927).

The monastery of St. Andrew on the *Clivus Scauri*, on the Caelian hill, where Augustine was professed, was the private house of Gregory's family adapted for monastic purposes. One can still see on the *Clivus Scauri* the windows of the rooms used for worship in such a house before the erection of a later basilican church.²³ Gregory, like a number of others wishing to establish a Benedictine community, had in fact turned his ancestral house into a monastery. In this respect he was following the custom which existed before the Edict of Milan, of using parts of private houses for Christian purposes. Some examples of these house-churches survive in the east: one from the 3rd century at Dura Europos on the Euphrates; others from the 4th century in Syria, as at Kirk Bega and Umm-al-Jemal. In Rome there is the exceptionally well-preserved house-church of the 3rd century at S. Martino ai Monti, commonly identified as the 'titulus Equitii'.²⁴ It looks as if a number of house-churches, or at any rate houses with chapels in them, existed in Roman Britain in the 4th century. The best known example is, of course, Lullingstone in Kent. That there were others is indicated by the chi-rho signs found in the 18th century on mosaic pavements at Frampton, Dorset,²⁵ and very recently and excitingly at Hinton St. Mary, Dorset.

Reverting to the lateral adjuncts or porticus which are the distinguishing feature of these six early Kentish churches, what purpose did they serve? Three explanations have been advanced: (1) that they were chambers for the subsidiary purposes of the church similar to the *diaconicon* and *prothesis*, which were common features in the east; (2) that they were designed for sepulchral purposes; and (3) that they were intended as auxiliary chapels. The first point to note is that these adjuncts were always entered from inside the church, never from outside. The lateral porticus is therefore radically different from the western porticus (where it existed), which was a porch of entry. Throughout the 7th century, and indeed much later, the only entry into a church, apart from some Celtic instances (e.g. St. Piran's, Cornwall, Heysham, Lancs., and several in Ireland) was from the west. It was not until the 10th and 11th centuries that an entrance on the south side became fashionable.

In considering the lateral porticus it is better to deal separately with Reculver—which was not built till 60 years after the death of Augustine—and look first at St. Augustine's and St. Pancras, Canterbury, Lyminge, and St. Andrew, Rochester. We must omit St. Mary's because there is no evidence, either literary or archaeological, for a porticus. The function of the two eastern porticus at St. Augustine's (FIG. 6) admits of no doubt. Each was designed and used for burials. In St. Gregory's porticus on the north side are buried Augustine (604–609), Laurentius (619), Mellitus (624), Justus (627–631), Honorius (653) and Deusdedit (664). Opposite this episcopal mausoleum there is St. Martin's porticus containing the royal tombs of Ethelbert, Bertha, Edbald and others. Two points should be noted. First, Canterbury under Ethelbert and Augustine respected the civil law

²³ Emile Male, *The Early Churches of Rome* (1960), p. 46.

²⁴ J. B. Ward-Perkins, 'Constantine and the Christian basilica,' in *Papers Brit. School Rome*, xxii (1954), 80.

²⁵ Samuel Lysons, *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae*, 1, pt. iii (1808).

of Rome which forbade burial within the city walls. St. Augustine's is outside the city wall. The cathedral is within. Hence, the royal and episcopal burials are at the abbey, not the cathedral. Secondly, in the first half of the 7th century, Canterbury also observed the canon law which at that time forbade burial inside a church. Bede tells us²⁶ that when Augustine died (at some date between 604 and 609) his body was retained for a time outside the church, which was not yet completed. When the interment took place in St. Gregory's porticus, it took place there because the porticus was not considered as part of the church itself (*ipsa ecclesia*), but as a mere adjunct. In the middle of the porticus was an altar dedicated to Pope Gregory. After the burial of Deusdedit in 664 St. Gregory's porticus was full. The next archbishop of Canterbury to be buried was Theodore, 26 years later, in 690. Bede records²⁶ that Theodore was buried in the church itself, *in ipsa ecclesia*. By that time the rule against burials inside a church had been relaxed. Thus it was towards the end of the 7th century, or early in the 8th century, that in Rome itself the remains of a large number of early Christian saints and martyrs not previously accorded fitting burial, were brought to the church of St. Silvester, now the English national church in Rome. Burial inside a church was, however, still to be regarded as the exception rather than the rule, because St. Gregory's porticus was enlarged both northwards and westwards, presumably for further burials, and St. Martin's porticus was also extended westwards.

One cannot now see anything of the north porticus of the 7th-century church at Lyminge, because it is under the south wall of the early Norman church. But it is recorded (by Goscelin) that it contains the burial-place of St. Ethelburga, and it is a reasonable assumption that it was built for that purpose. This conclusion is strengthened by what we know of St. Andrew, Rochester (FIG. 9), built in 604. Bishop Tobias, who died over 100 years later (in 726), was buried in a porticus dedicated to St. Paul which he had made into a burial-place for himself on the north side of the church.²⁷ The dedication to St. Paul indicates that, as in the case of the porticus at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, the porticus at Rochester contained an altar. It would also seem that the north porticus at Rochester was not an original feature of the church, but was added later.

At St. Pancras, Canterbury, the position is more complicated. Examination of the existing south wall reveals a very curious feature. There was originally a doorway in it exactly opposite the doorway in the north wall. When the south porticus was built, this doorway was presumably in fact used. But it was subsequently blocked up, and a doorway cut to the west—presumably so that the porticus could accommodate the altar. The inference is that a porticus was first built for sepulchral purposes, and subsequently transformed into a chapel with an altar. If the porticus had been constructed originally for a chapel, the original doorway in the south wall could have been used, and the entire porticus sited a few feet to the east. This renders unlikely the tradition recorded by Thorn in the 14th century that Augustine celebrated at this altar.

If we now turn to the porticus at Reculver (FIG. 12) we find a quite different

²⁶ Bede, *H.E.*, II, 3.

²⁷ Bede, *H.E.*, V, 23.

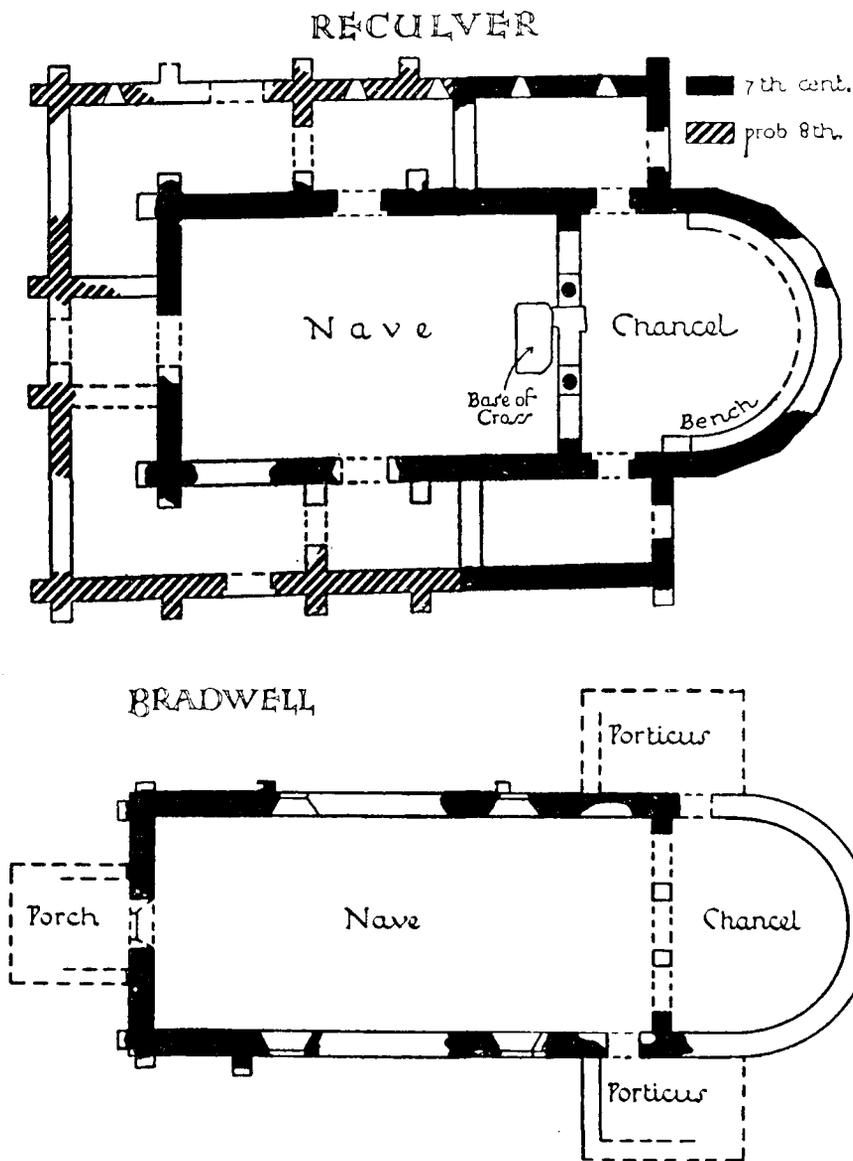


FIG. 12

PLANS OF CHURCHES OF ST. MARY, RECVLVER, KENT, AND
OF ST. PETER-ON-THE-WALL, BRADWELL, ESSEX (pp. 28 ff.)

(after Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 6, fig. 8)

arrangement. Whereas at St. Augustine's and at St. Pancras the entrance to the flanking porticus is from the nave, at Reculver the entrance both on the south and on the north is from the chancel. Reculver is best compared with St. Peter-on-the-Wall at Bradwell, Essex (FIG. 12), where a somewhat similar arrangement occurs,

except that at Bradwell the north porticus was entered from the chancel, and the south porticus from the nave. Bradwell is dated 653; Reculver 669. Both are some 50 years later than the Canterbury churches. There is no reason to suppose that the porticus at Reculver or Bradwell were designed or used either for sepulchral purposes or as chapels. The probable explanation must be sought elsewhere.

In the 5th and 6th centuries, when Italy was being overrun by Germanic invaders, the eastern empire enjoyed peace and prosperity. Churches and cathedrals multiplied in Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa. Since the conquests of Islam, most of these have remained in ruins, and only in our day are being extensively recovered and studied. But Syrian architecture, while it flourished, produced one of the finest and most dignified expressions in stone of early Christianity.

Christian architecture in Rome and Ravenna was handicapped and circumscribed by the persistence of classical and pagan traditions—not so much anti-Christian as stolidly conservative in sentiment. In other parts of the empire, and conspicuously in Syria, the artistic elements of the new religion had a freer scope for experiment, both in architectural developments and ecclesiastical arrangements. It is not surprising therefore that the Syrian churches evolved certain definite characteristics. A very common feature was the provision of chambers on either side of the sanctuary, but overlapping both nave and sanctuary, and used for the subsidiary purposes of the church. The chamber on the north side, known as the *diaconicon*, was the vestry or sanctuary, where the sacred vessels were kept and where the clergy robed. The entry into the *diaconicon* was, appropriately enough, from the chancel, as at both Reculver and Bradwell. The chamber on the south side, known in the east as the *prothesis*, was used for the reception by the deacon of the offerings of the faithful and their preparation for the altar. The *prothesis* was sometimes entered from the nave, as at Bradwell; sometimes from the chancel, as at Reculver.

If it is not an irrelevance—and I do not think it is—we may note the architectural and liturgical significance of the manner in which the offering was received, by quoting from that great authority, the late Dom Gregory Dix:²⁸

‘We know that all over christendom the layman originally brought his “prospora” of bread and wine with him to the “ecclesia”; that was a chief part of his “liturgy”. We know, too, that the deacons “presented” these offerings upon the altar; that was a chief part of their “liturgy”. What we do not know, as regards the pre-Nicene church generally, is when and how the deacons received them from the laity.

‘From the fourth century and onwards East and West differed considerably on this point in practice, and the difference is ultimately responsible for all the most important structural differences between the later Eastern and Western rites. In the East in later times it was the custom for the laity to bring their oblations to the sacristy or to a special table in the church before the service began. The deacons fetched them from there when they were wanted at the offertory (the beginning of the eucharist proper). This little ceremony soon developed into one of the chief points of “ritual splendour” in the Syrian Byzantine rites, and became the “Great Entrancé”. In the West the laity made their offerings for themselves at the chancel

²⁸ *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945), p. 120.

rail at the beginning of the eucharist proper. Each man and woman came forward to lay their own offerings of bread in a linen cloth or a silver dish (called the "offeritorium") held by a deacon, and to pour their own flasks of wine into a great two-handed silver cup (called the "scyphus" or the "ansa") held by another deacon. When the laity had made their offerings, each man for himself, the deacons bore them up and placed them on the altar.

'The difference between these two ways of receiving the people's offerings may seem a mere question of convenience, something quite trifling; and so in itself it is. But if any young liturgical student seeking a useful subject for research should undertake to trace the actual process of development of structural differences between the Eastern and Western rites since the fourth century (and it needs more investigation than it has received), he will find that they all hinge upon this different development of the offertory in the two halves of christendom.'

We know that the techniques of Syrian architecture influenced developments in Egypt and North Africa. But the *diaconicon* and *prothesis* were never adopted in Rome. They were unknown to St. Augustine. At S. Giovanni by the Latin Gate—one of the few churches built in Rome in the 6th century, and the only one that exhibits any semblance of eastern influence—the apse is flanked, not by two lateral chambers, but by two subsidiary apses. Neither St. Augustine nor his followers who built the Canterbury churches were familiar with or influenced by the Syrian form of overlapping chambers to the nave to form a *diaconicon* and *prothesis*. Hence there is no *diaconicon* or *prothesis* in the Augustinian churches. How then do we explain them at Reculver and Bradwell 50 years later? The explanation, I suggest, is the great change that occurred in Christendom between 600 and 650. Syrian civilization collapsed with the arrival of the Persians in 610. Damascus fell in 613. Jerusalem was captured in 614 and 90,000 Christians were slain in the Holy City. Although Heraclius stemmed the tide of Persian conquests, most of the eastern empire in Asia was soon doomed to the still more devastating and extensive destruction of the Moslem Arabs from 633 onwards. The great Syrian churches ceased to exist. There was a vast exodus westwards of Greek-speaking monks and craftsmen. They did not all go to Italy, though it is worth remembering that from the middle of the 7th century the popes were generally of Greek or Syrian origin. Although the migration cannot be traced in detail, it is a fair surmise that some of the exiled craftsmen from Syria arrived in Britain. It is difficult otherwise to explain the appearance on English soil at Reculver and Bradwell of architectural forms so distinctively eastern—and within 20 years of the collapse of the Syrian church.

I would therefore conclude by suggesting that a clear functional distinction should be drawn between the funerary porticus at St. Augustine's, Lyminge, Rochester and probably St. Pancras on the one hand, and the liturgically-designed porticus at Reculver and Bradwell. The latter seem to be, but the former were not, the result of eastern influence.