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THE CHURCH OF ST. OSWALD AT PADDLESWORTH.

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THE little church in which we are assembled is said to be the smallest in Kent,* though built upon the highest ground which the Eastern Division of the county presents. It is even less interesting from its early architectural features than it is from its connection, through the Mother Church of Lyminge, with the most interesting episode of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical history, the life of St. Æthelburga and the conversion of Northumbria. Both these are represented to us in the name of the northern king to whom it is dedicated, who being by marriage the nephew of Æthelburga was justly honoured by her, or her immediate successors at Lyminge, in the dedication of this ancient chapelry to his memory. No other church in Kent, and probably none in the south-eastern counties generally, records the name of the royal martyr, St Oswald, frequent as is the recurrence of it in the churches of Yorkshire and the ancient kingdom of Northumbria over which he reigned.

The parish of Paddlesworth is undoubtedly alluded to (as I think) in the earliest charter relating to the parish and Park of Lyminge. It confers upon the Abbot Adrian of St. Augustine's "*unum aratrum in quo mina ferri haberi cognoscitur quod pertinebat ad cortem quae appellatur Liminge.*"† This land is said to "adjoin that of the venerable Presbyter and Abbot Brytwald," then abbot of the monastery of Lyminge.

The iron stone which is here so plentiful, and which often has the appearance of lumps of the ore itself, was largely employed by the Romans and their Saxon successors, and the quantity of slag and refuse of iron-working which we find buried under the earth, or built into the ancient foundations, at Lyminge shews us that whatever metal could be extracted from it was turned to good account, by both these successive owners of the soil. Doubtless the foundation of a chapel followed up the possession of this new property, at a very early date, and either the monastery of St. Augustine or that of Lyminge, to which at some

* Its length is only $47\frac{3}{4}$ feet (the nave being $33\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and the chancel $14\frac{1}{2}$ feet). Its breadth is, in the nave $17\frac{1}{8}$ feet, and in the chancel $10\frac{3}{4}$ feet. The thickness of the wall is 2 feet 8 inches.

† Kemble Cod. Dipl. cart XXX. July, A.D. 689.

period before the Conquest (probably by exchange or purchase) the donation of Oswyn had devolved, provided in this manner for the spiritual wants of those who were engaged in the work which is here indicated. At the period of the Conquest, Paddlesworth manor was one of the appendages of the manor of Lyminge, as was also that of Stanford. The two appendages are thus described in Domesday:—“Of this manor (Leminges) three tenants of the archbishop hold two sulings and a half, and half a yoke, and have there five carucates in demesne and twenty villeins with sixteen borderers, having five carucates and a half, and one servant, and two mills of seven shillings and six pence, and forty acres of pasture. There is a wood for twelve hogs. *There are two churches.* On the whole it was worth eleven pounds.” In the interesting contemporary record in the register of the Monastery of Christ Church not only are these two manors described, but the names of their tenants are added. “Of these (*i. e.* the seven ‘sulings’ of the manor of Lyminge) Rodbertus the son of Watson holds two sulings as a tenant (in feodo), and Robertus de Hardres holds in like manner half a suling, and Osbertus Pasfora, half a yoke.” Here we have the exact “two sulings and a half, and half a yoke” of Domesday, and are led to conclude from the proportion of the two parishes and manors, that while Rodbertus was the tenant of Stanford, Robertus de Hardres and Osbertus Pasfora held the smaller estate of Paddlesworth. In the process of time both these manors and parishes were detached from the principal manor, and only the ecclesiastical ties remained. One of these was recently broken by the formation of Stanford into a separate rectory. Paddlesworth is still an appendage to Lyminge. In the subsequent century the manor appears to have fallen into the hands of the great Norman family of the Criols, Lords of Westenhanger, whose devotion to the newly founded monastery of St. Radigund of Bradsole in Polton (1191) led them to endow it with a farm at Paddlesworth, which remained in the possession of that house till the dissolution. I conceive that to the monks of this foundation, during their temporary residence here, may be ascribed the one or two features, of a higher architectural aim, which contrast so strongly with the primitive rudeness of the more ancient parts of this little church. The patronage of the Criols might have contributed to these improvements, while the numerous small bequests which were left to it during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries preserved it from ruin or decay. These I shall briefly mention, before I draw your attention to the architectural, or rather masonic, features which indicate so clearly a foundation before the Conquest.

In 1459, Robertus Regge after directing his burial "in the cemetery of the church of St Oswald in Padelesworth leaves 20^s to the high altar, and 3^s 4^d to the repair of the church."

In 1484, John Graunt after similar directions leaves a ewe-lamb to the light of the B. Virgin, and a bequest to the chapel of Padlesworth.

In the same year Simon Wilmington makes similar bequests to the church of St. Oswald de Pedilsworth. But among several others (more or less interesting) none of these ancient wills is so characteristic as that of John Barnesdale, written in English in 1526 :—

"First, I bequeath my soule to Almighty God, to our blessed Lady St Mary, and to all the company of hevyn, my body to be buried in the churchyard of Padelesworth. Item, I bequeathe to the high altar there for my tythes or offrynge forgotten xx^d. Item, I bequeathe towards the making of the new image of St Oswald in the same church v^s. Item, I will my executors do for my soule in the parish church of Padelesworth the day of my burying a dirige and iii. masses; at my monthesmynde, a dirige with iii. priests (?) and v. masses; and at my yeresmynde a dirge with iii. priests and v. masses on the morrow. And I will that every one of the said two daies, that is to say my monthes day and my yeresmynde, there be bestowed among the poor people there a shepe-bake in pasties, and as much brede and drinke as shall serve to the eting of the saide shepe. And I will that there be doone for my soule xx. years next after my decease in the forsaid church dirige and masse every year. . . . Item, to a secular priest to sing in the same church for my soule and all my friends soules, by the space of one hoole year x. marcs—and to the reparacion of the church there v. marcs—and to palyng in of the churchyard xi^d, and all the residue to be spent every year in an obit, as shall be thought necessary in equal porcions within the said church of Padelisworth for the health of my soule and of all Christian soules—and not only an obit but in other good deedes which shall be thought needful to be doone in the forsaid church of Padullesworth." These religious offices (as I gather from the will of John Brett of Lyminge in 1464) were gladly undertaken by the neighbouring canons of St Radigund. The "new image of St Oswald" doubtless perished in the storm of the Reformation, but its base remains still on the side of the altar closely adjoining the early piscina, to which I would direct your attention. There is an Elizabethan date carved or rather scratched on the former, probably indicating the date of the destruction of the image. The ancient chalice, which exactly resembles, in

miniature, that at Lyminge, is without doubt of the same date, 1578. But before we pass from these historical illustrations of the building to the actual features it presents to the eye, an incident which happened in the fourteenth century during the archbishopric of Islip may well detain us for a moment.

A certain woman named Sarah Cole (from whose family, probably, the farm adjoining the church derives its name) had died in Paddlesworth, and was buried in that chapel in prejudice of the rights of the mother church of Lyminge. Accordingly an appeal was addressed to the Archbishop, and a final decree read in the church of Maidstone (where he was probably then resident) by John de Somerley, who is styled "Auditor and Commissary of the Court of Audiences of causes and actions of the Lord Archbishop," to the effect that "the body of Sarah Cole should be exhumed by the parties against whom the action was brought (Robert Smith and William Pilcher of the hamlet of Paddlesworth), and at their own proper charges should be brought to the church of Lyminge and there buried." This occurred in 1352. This illustrates the fact that baptisms and burials were limited at this time to the mother church, and that the remarkable stone which now supports the font (a mere modern addition) had no connection with any original baptismal place or with a rite which here, until recent times, had no exercise. It should be borne in mind that baptismal churches both in town and country were not numerous in the earliest period, and that the privilege of baptism was rarely or ever possessed by any but churches of the highest rank.*

I may now draw attention to the structural features of the church which illustrate these remarks:—

The little round-headed windows consisting externally of only three stones, and having a double (though unequal) splay, the long-and-short work you have doubtless observed in the quoining of the nave and chancel, the wide-jointed masonry, if masonry it can be called, suggestive of the earliest period—these and many other features taken in connection with the known history of the church, and further illustrated by the fact that its wild and remote situation protected it more than any of the neighbouring places from the Danish inroads, must lead to the belief that the little church in which we stand belongs to a period anterior to the Conquest; while its dedication to St. Oswald, a name which the Normans could have never known, and involving a claim of sanctity which they would have never recognised, proves that it was in exist-

* Martene de Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus, lib. i., art. ii., c. 15.

ence prior to the great survey which itself (at least in Kent) represents the ecclesiastical state of the period of the Confessor rather than that of the days of the Conqueror.

The rude round opening at the side of the chancel arch, evidently a hagioscope or squint, will not escape the attention of those present, who may also remark the sockets for candles in the stones of the windows, formerly the depositories of the many lights which once illustrated the church. The South door, (which was engraved in the now rare prospectus of Mr. Streatfeild's projected history,) is probably of the same date as the choir of Canterbury Cathedral. It is a feature of peculiar interest, though at least a century later than the north door, which belongs to the early Romanesque period.

I may mention, in conclusion, that during the reparation and restoration of the church a year or two ago, fragments of a Norman arch were found in the west wall, which was of a later date, apparently, than the rest of the building, and in a very ruinous state; while under the church, nearly in the centre of the nave, an immense stone was found without date or inscription, under which at some depth, in the sandy soil below, was a massive oak coffin, portions of which were very sound, but to what period or person it belonged there was not the slightest indication. The restoration, faithfully and loyally carried out by our diocesan architect, Mr. Clarke, in a true antiquarian spirit, elicited the strongest expressions of approval from my late friend Sir William Tite when he visited the church immediately after its completion.