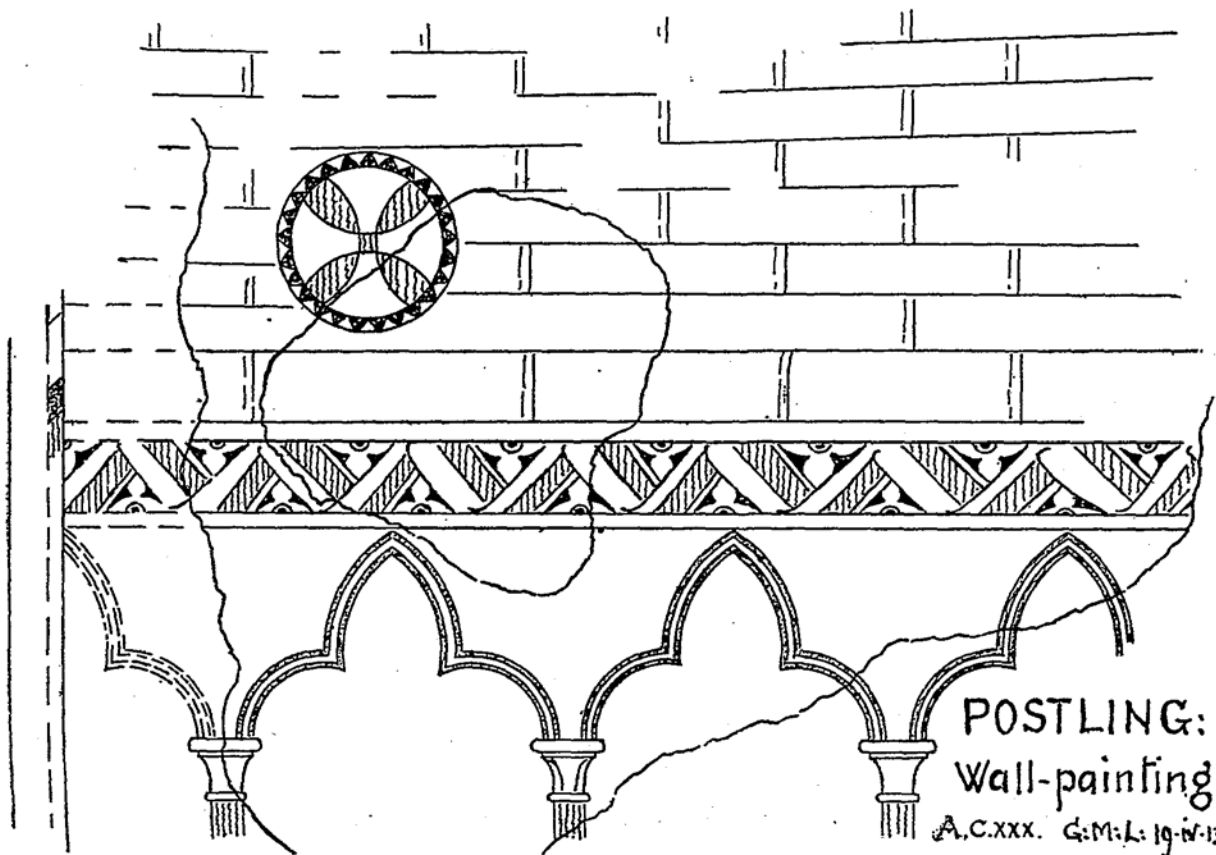




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POSTLING:
Wall-painting.

A.C. xxx. G.M.L. 19-IV-13.

POSTLING CHURCH.

BY AYMER VALLANCE, F.S.A.

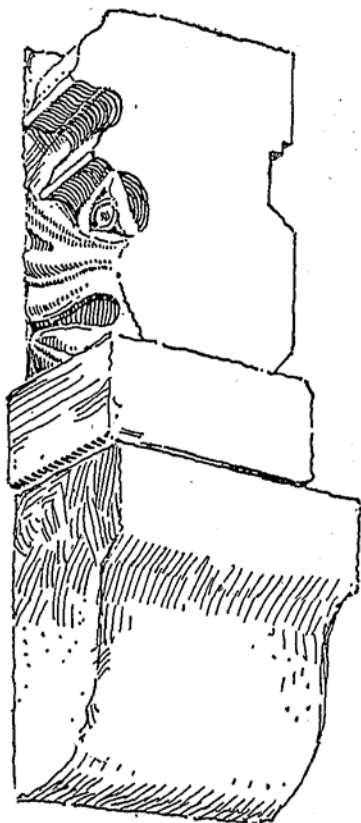
THE building is of mixed materials—not much ashlar, but mainly pebbles and unknapped flint, intermixed with a few fragments of tiles. The original plan comprised a nave 22 feet wide by barely 40 feet long, and a square-ended chancel 15 feet wide by about 16 feet long, both without buttresses. The first addition was a western tower about 8 feet square on plan; the second the eastward extension of the chancel to its present length of 28 feet. There is a south porch, but it is not worth taking account of, being a mean erection of the year 1825. The axis of the chancel has a more northward inclination than that of the nave.

A printed description is circulated, which says that the church, erected earlier, was most likely rebuilt on the acquisition of the advowson by St. Radegund's Priory in or about 1200. This date, however, seems far too late to be compatible with the primitive rubble-masonry and the rude herring-bone work of the exterior. The lower portion of the walls of the nave and of the west part of the chancel should rather be attributed to the end of the eleventh century, and the upper portion to a remodelling with lancet windows in the thirteenth century. One of the original windows—the middle one on the north side of the nave—remains almost intact, for though the head has been tampered with, to give it a pointed shape, the semi-circular rear-arch and the wide, deep splay are of such an early-Norman character as could not possibly belong to the thirteenth century. For the rest, the windows are mostly plain lancets of early thirteenth-century construction. The rear-arch of the easternmost window on the north side of the nave has a handsomely-moulded escocinson rib of about the middle of

the thirteenth century. The corresponding window on the south has been filled in at the apex and widened at the sides for the insertion of a two-light square-headed window of elegant tracery about the middle of the fourteenth century. Beneath its left-hand corner is a piscina.

In the west part of the nave should be noted traces of mural painting of late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century date, executed in yellow and deep chocolate-brown. The most considerable remains are on the south wall to west of the door. The lower part represents an arcade of trefoiled arches supported on slender shafts. Immediately above the arcade and six feet from the present floor-level runs a nine-inch horizontal band of turnover zigzag, cusped; and above the band up to the wall-plate the wall is decorated with an imitation of masonry courses, upon which is a consecration cross, fairly complete. This scheme of decoration appears to have been continued throughout the nave, for another small portion of it is to be seen to east of the south door, and a larger portion on the west wall to north of the door into the tower.

On each side of the nave may be seen the sawn-off stump of the rood-loft breastsummer, embedded in the wall and supported on a massive stone corbel. Enough is left to shew that the work, of late-fifteenth or early-



North end of rood-loft breastsummer.*

* Drawn by A. J. Ashdown from a photograph by Aymer Vallance.

sixteenth century date, was richly moulded, sculptured, and coloured. In the back of each stump is seen the cavity in which were housed the joists that upheld the rood-loft floor, their eastern extremities resting on the ledge formed by the setting-back of the east wall of the nave.

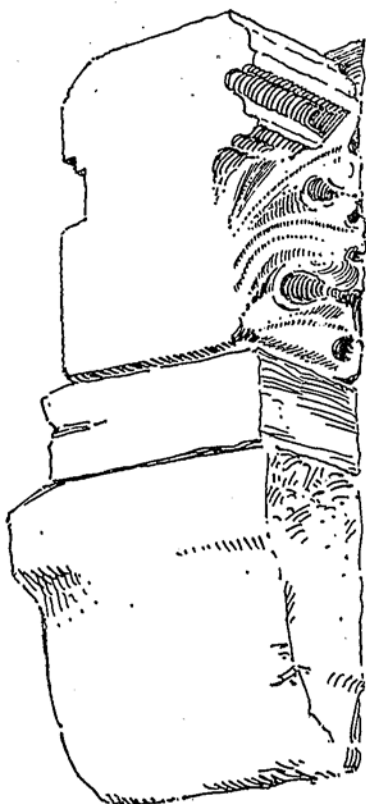
The nave has a king-post roof of Perpendicular work. Sir Stephen Glynne noted "a few remnants of old seats."

The font has a plain cubical basin tapering downwards and supported on five cylindrical shafts, a large one in the middle and a slenderer one at each angle. The plinth is of Bethersden marble. The old lead lining is retained.

The wall between nave and chancel is 3 feet 3 inches thick up to the level of the springing of the chancel arch, from whence upwards it is some six inches thinner on its western face.

The arch, which has a clear opening 9 feet 9 inches wide, is acutely two-centred, with a flat soffit and chamfered edges. The impostes are sculptured each with two tiers of indented ornament, characteristic of the transitional period. Only a portion of that on the south side is authentic. In the apex of the arch may be seen a small iron staple, possibly for the veil before the rood in Lent.

The chancel, presumably in the first half of the fourteenth century, was prolonged eastward by about as much as two-thirds of its former length. A conspicuous vertical joint in the exterior of the south wall marks the limits of the



South end.*

older and newer work. None of the herring-bone work already referred to occurs to east of this joint. It will moreover be noticed that the easternmost window on either side of the chancel is later than the rest. The east window, or at least the exterior of it, has been renewed. When Sir Stephen Glynne wrote, it had "three trefoiled lancet lights within a pointed arch."

The buttresses at the north-east and south-east of the chancel belong apparently to the time of its enlargement in the fourteenth century. Inside, a restored piscina on the south side of the chancel, a tiny trefoil-headed cavity of rude workmanship in the north wall, in line with the altar, and a curious irregular-shaped recess in the west wall of the chancel, north of the chancel arch, should be noticed. The probable explanation of the last-named feature is that the stone at the head of the recess was found embedded in the wall during repairs or restoration, and that the discoverers, supposing it to have some significance, left it exposed. Fixed to the floor in the north-east corner of the chancel is a fragment of a stone coffin-lid, which is believed to date from the fourteenth century. But the most remarkable object is a stone tablet, about six inches square, let in under a window on the north side of the chancel and incised with an inscription in early capitals, recording that the church was dedicated on the Feast of St. Eusebius to Blessed Mary, the Mother of the Lord. The absence of any mention of the year deprives the record of much of the historical value that would otherwise have attached to it.

A very peculiar feature is a pair of stone corbels about 18 inches apart on either side of the chancel. On the westernmost corbel on the south rests the stump end of a moulded and painted beam, embedded in the wall, and sawn off at about 6 or 8 inches length. The back of the beam is morticed for the insertion of an horizontal joist, the other extremity of which would rest on the top of the eastern corbel. The corbels, then, evidently supported a platform or gallery across the chancel, the primary purpose of which wants explanation. It was so situated, however, that it might well have fulfilled the subsidiary purpose of suspending

the Lenten veil. The nearest parallel instance is the timber arch in the chancel of St. Martin's, Colchester, but in that case there is no sign of anything like a gallery. The chancel roof was robbed of interest by renovation in 1885.

The west tower opens from the nave by a two-centred doorway, and has a similar west door. The lateral walls of the tower are slightly prolonged westward to form a pair of shallow buttresses. The tower is surmounted by a shingled spire. The uppermost window on the south side of the tower bears the date 1852, but the windows in the lower stages appear to be contemporaneous work of the first half of the thirteenth century. The building underwent a general restoration in 1897, but the process seems to have been fairly innocent of harm to the ancient fabric.



INCISED DEDICATION STONE:

A.C.XXX. POSTLING CHURCH. G.M.L. 19115-