



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

KENT CHURCHES – SOME NEW ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

TIM TATTON-BROWN

Between 1946 and 1952, the late F.C. Elliston-Erwood published a series of papers entitled 'Plans of, and brief architectural notes on, Kent Churches'.¹ In 1991, I was commissioned by the two Diocesan Advisory Committees of Canterbury and Rochester to undertake a new archaeological survey of all the Kent churches. It might be useful, therefore, if I attempt to continue Elliston-Erwood's series forty years after he stopped.

1. THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, ADISHAM (Fig. 1)

This fine cruciform church was the subject of a brief article in *Archaeologia Cantiana* over a century ago by the then rector.² No plan was published then, and it is perhaps time to look in more detail at its fascinating architectural history.

The church lies on an east-facing slope on the Upper Chalk about 150 ft. above sea-level. Just below it was a large and ancient pond (now, alas, filled in) at a major crossroads in the centre of east Kent some 7 miles south-east of Canterbury. The parish was a rich 'exempt' parish under the patronage of the archbishop, and the Court Lodge at the centre of Adisham Manor lay immediately west of the church. The manor was given to the monks of Christ Church by Archbishop Lanfranc in his reorganisation, but had belonged to the

¹ Elliston-Erwood published many papers (and plans) of Kent churches between 1921 and 1962, and died in 1968, aged 85. See obituary and 'select list of publications' by L.R.A. Grove, *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiv (1969), 1-7.

² H. Montagu Villiers, 'Adisham Church', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), 157-161. See also W.A. Scott-Robertson, 'Forty rectors of Adisham', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), 162-8. The Revd. T.S. Frampton's full list of rectors is on the nave wall.

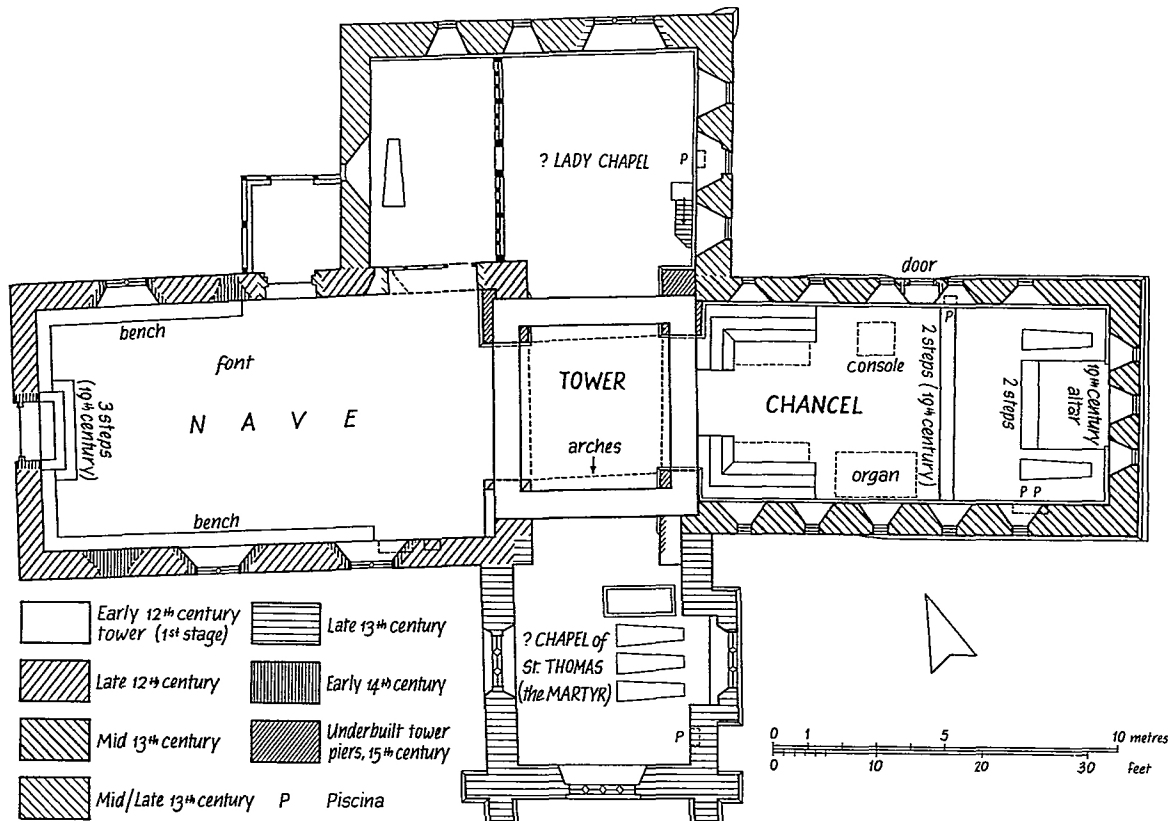


Fig. 1. The Church of the Holy Innocents, Adisham

Canterbury Cathedral community long before this.³ In the late Anglo-Saxon period, it is likely to have been a 'Minster' church, though no early fabric survives above ground. The chapelry of Staple was attached to Adisham from at least the thirteenth century until 1862.

The earliest visible part of the fabric is the first stage of the tower of the early to mid-twelfth century. This has four round-headed windows; those on the north and south are completely blocked up and all their external faces were covered by the later, higher roofs. There are visible remains, however, on all four external faces of the drip lines of the original lower roofs, showing that from the mid-twelfth century the church was already cruciform. The Purbeck marble font with a square arcaded bowl on a cluster of five shafts (now in the middle of the nave) is also of the earliest visible phase.

In the second phase, probably of the late twelfth century, the four crossing piers were cut back and enlarged to allow four slightly pointed arches with square soffits (slightly recessed) to be created. They sit on new square scallop capitals. Probably at the same time the nave was rebuilt and perhaps enlarged; a lancet in its north side dates from this period. (This lancet had probably been blocked in the fourth phase when the enlarged north transept was built, but was perhaps re-opened in 1869 when wall-paintings were found on either side of the internal diagonal face). The late twelfth-century nave almost certainly had three lancets on either side. Three of these, two on the south and one on the north, were replaced in the fourteenth century by larger windows, but two more (in the centre of the north wall and at the west end of the south wall) were simply blocked up; their positions can just be identified in the knapped flint infill on the external walls.

A new enlarged chancel was built in the third phase of about the mid-thirteenth century. This has five large lancets on either side and three in the east wall; all have internal rere-arches (unlike the smaller late twelfth-century lancet). On the south side of the chancel stands a fine contemporary double piscina with a deeply moulded trefoil head and detached Purbeck marble shafts with capitals and bases. There is another piscina, possibly built at the same time, in the north wall just east of the perhaps later doorway. At this time, too, the central crossing tower was heightened with four new lancets to project above the roofs of the nave and chancel (and subsequently above those of the later transepts).

³ The well-known charter of A.D. 616 (Sawyer no. 1609) was, however, forged in the eleventh century; see N.P. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (1984), 100–102.

In the fourth phase, which was probably only a very short time after the third phase, a new enlarged north transept (with a western 'aisle') was built. It also has large lancets with rere-arches and an internal string-course on the east and north. The central of the three lancets on the east wall is slightly taller and below this window on the inside is a centrally placed piscina. The easternmost lancet of three in the north wall was later replaced (see below). An even wider high lancet was built, perhaps a little later, in the west wall of this transept.⁴

The north door to the nave, with its hood-mould on tufts of trefoil leaves, is also perhaps of the mid-thirteenth century, as is the arch cut through into the nave from the west end of the north transept. This has simple stopped chamfers on all four arrises.

In the next or fifth phase of c. 1300, the enlarged south transept was built. This has angle buttresses to the south-east and south-west and a gabled east chapel extension (like those of Ickham and Wingham churches). To the east and west are similar trefoil-headed three-light windows with hood-moulds. In the south wall is a four-light window with a diagonally placed quatrefoil just above two trefoils, which in turn are above the two pairs of trefoil-headed lights; there is no hood mould. This chapel,⁵ like the north transept, breaks across the horizontal string-course in the tower, showing that it is later than the nave and chancel. When the south transept was built, a new north window of three lights was inserted into the north transept, which appears to have acquired its gable end at this time. This window also has a diagonally placed quatrefoil at its head, but then has extraordinarily complicated tracery to link it with the three trefoil heads below; unlike its opposite number in the south transept, this window does have an external hood mould.

The sixth and final main phase was the insertion in the nave of new two-light windows with ogee hood-moulds and finials. The ends of the hood-moulds are decorated with carved heads, while the top lights in the windows are hexafoils. The new west doorway and the five-light window with three octofoils in its head above, though heavily restored, must be of the same date (Sir Stephen Glynne, who visited the church in 1863, called it 'a very bad modern one').⁶ This

⁴ Teynham church has an enlarged chancel and two very long transepts of about the same date. See F.C. Elliston-Erwood, 'Teynham church: architectural notes', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxv (1921), 145-59.

⁵ Two chapels are documented in late medieval wills, the Lady Chapel (?north transept) and the chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr (?south transept), *Testamenta Cantiana* (East Kent, 1907), 1-2.

⁶ S.R. Glynne, *Notes on the Churches of Kent* (1877), 244-6. This is a useful description of the church before its restoration.

final phase is early fourteenth-century so that all the building work of the six main phases was probably erected within two centuries. There can be no doubt that the expensive rebuildings of the church in this form were made because of the archbishop, its patron, and the monks of Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, who owned the manor and were directly farming it. Documentary evidence⁷ shows that they were also building a large neighbouring stone court-lodge in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The north doorway to the chancel perhaps also dates from this final period as do the many now worn and relaid floor-tiles in the chancel and the south transept of the church. The higher crenellated top to the central tower was probably also put in at this period (though cut down and replaced with a pyramid roof in 1869, as shown by the pre-1869 photograph on the wall of the vestry). Four bells (not in a frame) are in the upper stage of the tower.

After this only the re-casing with massive ragstone blocks of three of the crossing piers was undertaken in the late Middle Ages. The timber-framed north porch (much restored) and the crown-post roof of the nave are also later, perhaps of the fifteenth century. The heavily restored 'poppy-head' stalls at the west end of the chancel and the neighbouring screen to the west (only part of the base is original) probably date from the early sixteenth century. This was the rood screen and has linenfold panelling.⁸ The two roofs in the north transept appear to be seventeenth-century reconstructions of late medieval structures, while the chancel roof was constructed in 1869 replacing a low pitched slate roof of perhaps the early nineteenth century. Major restorations were undertaken by William White in 1869–70.⁹

The predominant building material is locally acquired flint used for most of the wall facing. There are occasional Roman bricks and lumps of local sandstone. The main ashlar and decorated stone for windows, etc., is Caen with some later use of Kentish ragstone. The internal string-course in the chancel and north transept appears,

⁷ In Prior Henry of Estry's 'Memorandum Book', British Library, Cotton Galba E IV, fo.102v.

⁸ The making of the new rood loft is documented in 1528, *Testamenta Cantiana* (East Kent, 1907), 2. There is also a document in the Canterbury City archives mentioning John Curteys, 'Carpenter of Canterbury' (fl. 1476–1490) who had a case put to arbitration between him and 'Thomas Julle, in regard to Curtys' claim to 40 shillings due to him for repairs on the belfry of the parish church of Adisham', J. Harvey, *English Medieval Architects* (Revised Edition, 1987), 77. Sadly no ancient timberwork survives in the tower.

⁹ An editorial footnote in Glynné (*op.cit.* note 5), 245 says 'Adisham church is very judiciously restored, and fitted with open seats.'

however, to be of an oolitic limestone. The font bowl is of Purbeck marble as are perhaps the medieval floor slabs,¹⁰ and the original shafts in the chancel double piscina.

There is also a re-used late medieval grave-marker in the west face of the buttress to the south-east pier,¹¹ and two more in the blocked up north and south twelfth-century windows in the first stage of the tower.

A very important timber panel and two posts (part of a screen) were taken to the church from Canterbury Cathedral in c. 1703, by the then rector, John Batteley (Rector, 1684–1708, who was also Archdeacon of Canterbury) to use as an altar reredos. It dates from the late thirteenth century.¹² Traces of original paint still remain on the original panel, and a lower panel (inserted in c. 1703 for the church reredos) is decorated with early eighteenth-century painted figures of the four evangelists.

2. ST. COSMAS AND ST. DAMIAN IN THE BLEAN (Fig. 2)

This church was very heavily restored in 1866 when the whole of the chancel was refaced, and a large new north aisle was added.¹³

Only the west wall of the nave, and a small part of its south wall show anything of the ancient fabric, and it is clear that the nave walls are basically thirteenth-century in date. The west wall and south-west quoins appear to have been rebuilt at this time and contain re-used pieces of Caen and Reigate stone (probably from the twelfth-century church).¹⁴ The south-east quoin of the nave, which has been rebuilt

¹⁰ There are two plain grave slabs in the chancel (now on either side of the high altar) as well as one at the west end of the north transept, and four more in front of the altar in the south transept (the latter possibly still *in situ*). Two of those in the south transept still have very worn inscriptions round the edge; one is apparently for an early fourteenth-century rector, Thomas Upton.

¹¹ See B. Stocker, 'Medieval gravemarkers in Kent', *Church Monuments*, i, pt. 2 (1986), 106–14.

¹² See the fine drawing of this by W.D. Carøe, in *Archaeologia*, lxii (1911), Pl. XLIV, opp. p. 360. The two posts, with their fine carved capitals, may date from the late twelfth century.

¹³ The church lies two miles north north-west of Canterbury in the centre of the Royal Forest of Blean. It is just over 230 ft. above sea-level, and is isolated. The 'village' of Blean has moved away to the eighteenth-century turpiketoad to the west. Major earthworks immediately south-west of the church (probably part of the medieval settlement) are sadly now being ploughed out.

¹⁴ The church is first documented in Domesday Monachorum as paying 12*d.* for its chrisem. In 1206, it was appropriated to the Eastbridge Hospital in Canterbury and, in 1375, Archbishop Simon of Sudbury endowed a perpetual vicarage here.

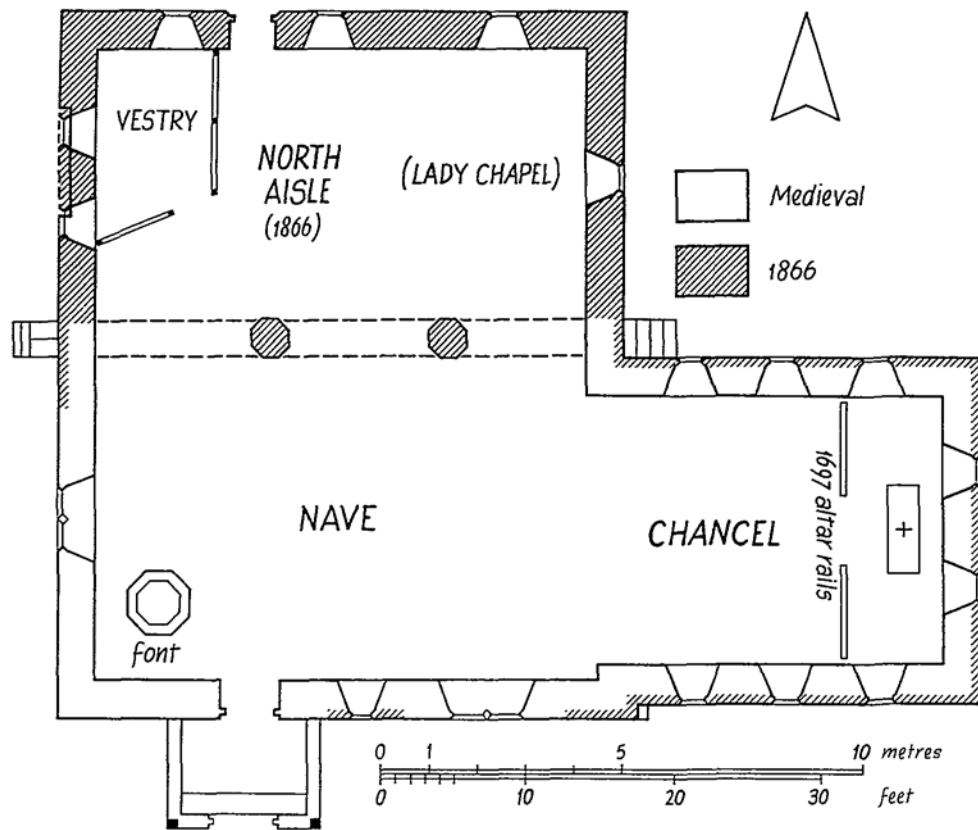


Fig. 2. St. Cosmas and St. Damian in the Blean

(in 1866), is made of small-block Caen stone, which may also suggest a twelfth-century date. The north door of the new north aisle has side jambs of Caen stone with simple stopped chamfers. This is also perhaps of later twelfth-century date (perhaps re-used from the nave north door). The south door is of about the thirteenth century with simple broached-stop chamfers.

The central lancet window on the south side of the chancel is also partly ancient (possibly thirteenth century). All the other windows in the chancel were renewed externally in 1866, but the three north lancets have mainly thirteenth-century rere-arches on the inside. There was originally a two-light window in the east wall (apparently with a quatrefoil above) as the 1809 Petrie drawing shows.¹⁵

On the south side of the nave, something of the earlier external plaster facing has survived. East of the porch, however, it has been renewed recently (and painted grey!).

There is one restored lancet in the middle of the south side of the nave, and to the east of it a two-light west perpendicular window with hood-mould (fifteenth century) made of Caen and Rag. The inserted two-light window is also perpendicular and under a hood mould. It is surrounded by early buff brick (fifteenth century), no doubt put in when the window was inserted.

There was once a bell-turret (with one bell), above the west gable (mentioned by Hasted), but this has been removed, and a new bell-turret has been placed at the west end of the north aisle. It contains a bell.

The south porch, recently restored, is perhaps an early twentieth-century replacement of an earlier one. Internally, late medieval crown-post roofs survive over the nave and chancel (three bays in the nave and two in the chancel; the chancel roof had earlier racked to the east). In the nave the wall-plates and tie-beams have a simple concave chamfer, while in the chancel it is a double concave chamfer on the wall plates and tie beams. There is no chancel arch, just the two end trusses for the roofs abutting each other. On the underside of the nave tie-beam, are mortice holes for a central post with braces on either side and smaller holes for struts. This may relate to a rood-screen/loft.

There is also a plain octagonal font on a step in the south-west corner of the nave.

The 1866 restoration has removed almost all other features, though the 1697 altar rails (with turned balusters), and altar table base (now in the north aisle chapel) of similar date survive. There are also two

¹⁵ A copy of this drawing can be seen in the scrapbook in the K.A.S. library.

Bethersden marble slabs in the chancel central aisle and the fine early eighteenth-century Boys wall monument in the south-west corner.¹⁶

The late Victorian fittings (pews, choir stalls, pulpit, etc.) are quite good, and there is also some good late Victorian and later glass (a few fragments of earlier glass have been put in the border of the central lancet on the south side of the chancel). The best glass items are perhaps the three east lights, which were designed in 1866 by Holiday and made by Powell's.¹⁷ There is quite a good 3-bay side-purlin and windbrace roof in the new north aisle of 1866.

Most of the external walls are of the heavy 1866 knapped flint set in grey cement (i.e. the whole of the old chancel, as well as the new north aisle). However, the west wall of the nave is still mostly original thirteenth-century work, with ragstone 'on-end' quoins and rubble walling containing small knapped flints, Roman bricks, septarian nodules, etc., as well as some re-used Caen and Reigate stone. Around the top of the indented Perpendicular west window are small buff bricks (probably of the fifteenth century). The south-east quoin of the nave is of Caen stone and the fifteenth-century windows are made of Caen stone and Kentish rag.¹⁸

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to David Lawson, of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, for drawing the plans from my rough originals. Also to my wife, Veronica, for word-processing my text.

¹⁶ To John Boys (*obit.* 1710) and his wife (*obit.* 1717) of Hode.

¹⁷ J. Newman, *Buildings of England: North-East and East Kent* (3rd edition, 1983), 146.

¹⁸ There is also a new (1979) parish hall immediately to the north-east of the church within the graveyard.