

Churches Committee Kent Churches - Architectural & Historical Information

St Stephens Church, Hackington TR 1483 5913

CANTERBURY DIOCESE: HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Tim Tatton-Brown's Survey 1993

LOCATION: The church lies about ½ mile north of Canterbury on the head brick earth terrace at c. 50 feet above O.D. Immediately to the west of it (until demolished in the late 18th century) was Place House (see Arch. Cant. 45 (1933), 201-4 and Arch. Cant. 48 (1936), 238-240), the residence from c.1227 until c. 1540 of the Archdeacons of Canterbury and then of the Manwoods and Hales. Earlier it may have been the site of Archbishop Baldwin's College.

DESCRIPTION: The architectural history of this church has been very well surveyed by K.H. Jones (in Arch. Cant. 44 (1932), 253-263), and this survey is accompanied by an excellent measured plan by G.M. Livett. It is, therefore, only necessary here to summarize the earlier work, and perhaps to amplify a few details where a different interpretation is given.

The earliest fabric surviving above ground belongs to the nave; and must date from the late 11th/early 12th century. These early walls are made with flint and reused Roman brick set 'herringbone-wise' in thick layers of coarse lime mortar. The outer face was then lightly rendered all over. The finest original architectural feature is the south doorway (now in the later porch), which is made of Caen stone, and has a 'chip-carved' diaper pattern in the tympanium over a timber-lintel. The side shafts have cushion capitals, and there was perhaps a similar doorway in the west wall, though with more elaborate chevron - covered arches over it. There may also have been a doorway in the north wall. Two original windows survive above the south porch. They are round-headed and have quite large openings. That on the east was lengthened downwards in the 13th century. Another similar window, but at a lower level, is on the north side of the nave at the west end. It is perhaps reset in the 19th century from a higher up position to the east (This window is blocked in an early 19th century view).

This church is now a cruciform church and the arches into the north and south transepts are semi-circular (though slightly flattened) with roll-mouldings on the nave side of the arch, and with mainly plain (and in part restored) piers. The south-east pier has a more elaborate cushion capital at the top and chip-carved work on the abacus. Jones suggests that they are arches that were reset in the early 13th century, using materials from Archbishop Baldwin's late 1180s college. This is highly unlikely, and it is much more likely that they are original early to mid-12th century arches (on a large scale) still in situ. This suggests that there was already a prominent cruciform church here before Archbishop Baldwin started to construct his college. The surviving external quoins on the east and west sides (at the extreme north end) of the south transept are also probably mid-12th century in date, though the 12th century transepts have disappeared totally.

The west doorway was also perhaps rebuilt in the later 12th century, though its inner arch has comb-chislework of a 13th century date. The lower part is heavily restored in Portland stone. During the early-mid 13th century a tower was inserted at the west end of the nave by putting a north-south wall on its east side with a pointed arch in it. Large angle buttresses were added on the north-west and south-west corners (containing much reused masonry), and an upper stage was built with large Hythe stone quoins (and some reused Caen stone blocks). There is a 13th century rectangular window half way up the wall. The upper windows were replaced in the 15th century, but still have 13th century internal jambs. All the 13th century work is characterized by the use of the comb-chisel. The internal heads of the upper tower windows are of tile voussoirs (also probably 15th century replacements).

The lancet windows in the nave, with rere-arches, must date from the later 13th century, but the century blocked lancet in the west wall of the south transept (with Caen jambs and a Reigate stone head) may be earlier. Also of a late 13th century date is the chancel, which is in three bays and has external buttresses. Jones' suggestion that the (outer) window tracery was inserted a few decades later in the early to mid-14th seems unlikely (there is no sign of window insertion in the fabric of the outer walls which are full of reused fragments and Roman bricks and thin tiles). Much of the external tracery has been restored in Bath stone, and the tracery in the upper quatrefoils may be a 19th century insertion (cf. Early 19th cent. drawings). The original quoins to the buttresses and for the plinth (not made on the north) are of large blocks of dark green Hythe stone. The internal shafts in the chancel windows have been painted black to look like marble, but are in fact cut from the same blocks as the jambs. The north and south transepts were apparently rebuilt in the early 14th century, though the south transept was almost completely rebuilt in the late 16th century. The north wall of the north transept with its diagonal buttresses and trio of trefoils in the head of its three-light north window must be early 14th century as is the 2-light E. window of the S. transept. (5 light Perpendicular) replacement. Also added in the 15th century is the stone south-porch, which is particularly distinctive in having much dark brown ironstone in its south gable. The chancel arch is perhaps early 15th century.

Of unique importance to this church is the surviving indenture for the making of a new rood-screen in 1519-20 (see A. Vallance in op. cit. below). This screen still survives, though its top was mutilated in the 19th century, and it was moved to the entrance of the south transept in 1966. Another early 16th century feature is the 3-light east window to the north transept. The simple three- and five-cant roofs (with three tie beams each in the nave and chancel) may also have been replaced in the 16th century. They all have painted lath and plaster ceilings. The south transept was almost completely rebuilt in the late 16th century in brick (with the south plinth repaired in the 19th century in knapped flint) for the Manwood family pew (with a brick burial-vault beneath). The low pyramid roof, and unusual hexagonal spirelet over it, on the western tower has a frame that may date from the late 15th or 16th century (with later repairs). The ? Late Medieval font was given by Sir Roger Manwood in 1591 (inscribed). There was a major mid-19th century restoration when the church was refloored and repewed.

BUILDING MATERIALS: The earliest materials are whole flint and reused Roman bricks with Caen stone dressings. Some Reigate stone was introduced for quoins and jambs in the 13th century, as well as larger blocks of Hythe stone for the tower quoins. Many reused materials are also found in the tower, chancel and north transept, no doubt from the earlier church. There is also some local ironstone and other Tertiary sandstones (with mollusc holes).

Brick was introduced in the late 16th century (S. transept) and the usual Bath stone in the later 19th century, as well as some knapped flint and Portland stone. Also some more recent heavy cement render, and window repairs in ? Portland stone.

EXCEPTIONAL MONUMENTS IN CHURCH: Sir Roger Manwood (ob. 1592) and his helm + gauntlets on west wall of south transept. Also Lady Manwood (1641). There are also some fine early hatchments, and a unique poorbox, dated 1634. The tower screen (dated 1630) has a double-door, and a central mullion and tympanum which can be taken out for funerals. The Pulpit is early 17th century but on a later base. The original ring of six bells dates from 1746, and the Royal Arms on the west wall of the nave from 1695.

CHURCHYARD AND ENVIRONS:

Size: Large area around church with extensions to east.

Condition: Good

Building in churchyard or on boundary: The Archdeacon's house (Palace) was just to the south of the church.

Exceptional monuments: Some good monuments.

Ecological potential: ? Good

HISTORICAL RECORD (where known):

Earliest ref. to church: 12th century - Chapel of Hackington.

Late med. status: (vicarage\appropriation): Vicarage from 1227.

Patron: The Archbishop, then given and appropriated to the archdeaconry in 1227.

Other documentary sources: See Hasted IX (1800), 51-55 + Test. Cant. (E. Kent 1907), 144-5 mentions the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with a seat nearby 'newly built' (1491). Also lights of the Holy Cross (Rood), St Mary, St Erasmus, St John-the-Baptist, and St Katherine.

A very rare indenture for the making of a new Rood-screen in 1519-20 survives in the British Library (Add Ms 38139, fo 236) - transcribed in Arch. Cant. 44 (267-8). It was to be like the now-lost Rood screen in the Holy Cross church, Canterbury.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD:

Reused materials: Many Roman bricks in the earliest phase.

SURVIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS:

Inside present church: ? Good, but some burial vaults.

Outside present church: Quite good, but cut away by boiler house on N.E. side of nave and S.W. side of N. transept, and having quite a deep drainage channel around the outside.

RECENT DISTURBANCES\ALTERATIONS:

To structure: Some windows have been totally renewed externally (eg. lancet on S. side of nave) in ? Portland stone. A lower floor has been put into the tower in 1971, and the 1519-20 rood-screen was moved in 1966. The Manwood burial vault was opened in 1962. The bells were returned and rehung in 1971.

Quinquennial inspection (date\architect): May 1992/David Martin

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT:

The church and churchyard: A late 11th/early 12th century nave with a major expansion to a cruciform church in mid 12th century, and a large new chancel of c. 1300. The close connection with the Archdeacon of Canterbury from 1227, whose Palace was next door, makes this more than an ordinary parish council.

The wider context: The relationship of this church to Archbishop Baldwin's large new (uncompleted) college of the 1180s has yet to be found.

REFERENCES: K.H. Jones St.'Stephen's church, Hackington, and its possible connection with Archbishop Baldwin' with excellent plan by G.M. Livett and appendix on the Rood-screen by Aymer Vallance, Arch. Cant. 44 (1932), 253-268.

Guide Book: 1978 by John Hayes (with plan & drawings copied from Livett).

Photographs: In Kent Churches 1954 of south side of church (p.12), 1630 West Screen (p.138) and 1634 pillar almsbox

(p.146).

Plans & drawings: 5 views of the church in the early 19th century and Petrie view from S.W.in 1801. Plan (1932) by G.M. Livett (see above).

DATE VISITED: 14th & 23rd March 1993

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