

LITTLE STOUR RECORDS.

To be Typed
(4 copies) ①
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The next thing I am going to consider is always an important one - church dedications. Every church, as a "House of God", is of course primarily consecrated to the Almighty; but it is only a minority which express the fact by their actual names. Examples of this are Christ Church (the dedication of Canterbury Cathedral, although in course of centuries it has wavered between this, the Holy Trinity, and St. Thomas Becket), St. Saviour, the Holy Ghost (or Spirit), and, comprehensively, the Holy Trinity.

But from really early times it has been more usual to give a title to a church which relates to some venerated human being; in which case you must always understand the name of God behind this holy person, who is technically known as the "patron saint" of the church. Sometimes, however, there is found to be more than one, e.g., SS. Simon and Jude, Peter and Paul, Philip and James, and so on. It is probable that the oldest dedications of all related to martyrs, e.g., Stephen, Lawrence, Alban, and so forth. In such cases the church in question was sometimes built over or near their reputed

place of suffering for Christ; ^{and others elsewhere} ^{would take over the same name.} (2)
If you study ancient dedications throughout England, you will find that the greatest number of churches is dedicated to St. Mary, sometimes with the varied title of our Lady. This Mary is of course not the Magdalen, nor any other mentioned in Holy Scripture, but the Blessed Virgin, mother of our Lord.

The second place is taken by All Saints, or All Hallows. This is a Saxon dedication, and it is significant that within your own rural deanery, the church of Townmouth ('All Saints') still displays a few remains of pre-Conquest building. But it is of special interest that in Kent alone of English counties, All Saints give way, as to second place, to the Apostles Peter and Paul, who have always been considered the patrons of Christian Rome, just as Romulus and Remus were in its pagan times. The original dedication of the now destroyed but once mighty abbey church in Canterbury which for ages before its end was known as St. Augustine's, or Austin's, was to this martyred pair, Peter and Paul. The re-evangelisation of Kent was entirely under Roman

influence, and this may go far to explain why in this particular county the Roman protectors became so popular. After the abbey's change of title, however, we begin to find St. Augustine appearing in country churches, and in most cases these are known at one time to have belonged to that abbey.

In a few cases, as at Elustone, near Wingham, the dedication is unknown. In others, it has always been constant, but rests on nothing more than tradition. Some churches ~~are~~ now merely called St. Peter's can be proved originally to have borne the joint title to him and to St. Paul, that wonderful man who more than any ^{else} ^{one} made struggling Christianity a seed which took firm root.

You may find, in some cases, a dedication now in common use which is certainly erroneous. Thus at Pett, near Hastings, they call their church "SS. Mary and Peter," but the true version is St. Stephen.

Perhaps the foremost authority which decides a doubtful dedication is found in the last wills of parishioners of a particular place. For in medieval times they would often

insert in their testaments the name of the patron saint of their parish church. This brings us to your own three parishes. ④

PATRIBOURNE.

This ancient church is called St. Mary's, which is an example of the dedication by tradition only, for apparently no early document positively states the fact.

BRIDGE.

When we come to this chapel of Patrigo-bourne, we are on former ground. To-day it is known as St. Peter's, and this is confirmed as valid by a parishioner's will calling it so, in the year 1474.

BEKESBOURNE.

Still known likewise as St. Peter's, we find it confirmed by a similar will of 1507 - the same date as that on one of the brasses in the neighbouring church of Goodnestone (pronounced "funston").

It is always of great interest to find very rare dedications. Examples in Kent are St. Vincent (Littlebourne), St. Helen (Cliffe-at-Hoo), and St. Oswald (Paddlesworth near Hythe). These are all unique in Kent, whereas two only of its old churches are named after SS. Cosmas and Damian, two early Christian physicians - at Blean and Challock.