Parishes and parish churches in Kent : The lost church of Pett

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, there were rather
more than 400 parish churches in Kent. The site of every one of
them is known, with a single exception. A small church called
"Pett" or "Pette" has vanished from the map. If anyone knows
where it was, I should very much like to be told.

The following notes are the sum total of what I know about Pett
church. I have gone through them and tried to make sure that
they are comprehensible, but I have not tried to turn them into
proper English.

c 1090 - "De pytte, iii d'" - a chrism fee imposed by archbishop
Lanfranc (Ward 1933:66, Flight 2010:230) - in a 12th-century
version of the same list, the corresponding entry, "Petthe, iii
dener'", is entered under the heading "chapter of
Charing" (Flight 2010:231)

1281 - Ricard de Gylesham admitted as rector - patron Stephan
Girard of Romney (Reg Pecham) <Stephan Gerard occ 1284 as tenant
of Eastleigh in Lyminge>

1286 - Johan de Wygeton admitted as rector - patrons Agnes widow
of Hamo Pitte and Stephan son of Stephan <?Girard?> of Romney
(Reg Pecham)

1293 - pension of 3 shillings from church of Pette among assets
to belong to incoming vicar of Westwell - CCA-DCc-ChAnt/W/48

1295 - Hamo de Romenal sub-deacon admitted as rector (Reg
Winchelsey 902) - 1295 occ as deacon (907) - 1296 occ as rector
of church of Pette and priest (909) <I owe this and other
information to Karen Brayshaw of Canterbury Cathedral Library,
who kindly checked the indexes of Reg Winchelsey, Reg Chichele
and Reg Bourgchier for references to Pett.>

1318 - "Hamo de Remenale, Parson of the Church of Pette" occ as
dummy feoffee in fine relating to land in Westwell and Hothfield
(AC 14:255)

1328 - visitation in church of Westwell - "Sir John, rector of
the Church of Pette has withdrawn a pension of 3 shillings due
to the Vicar of Westwell ... the Vicar appeared and said that he
was satisfied" (AC 33:89)

1334 - "William atte Welle, parson of the church of Pette" occ
as dummy feoffee in fine relating to Boughton Aluph (AC 50:126,
Kent Records NS 5:268)

1349 - "From: Canterbury, archdeacon, official of / To:
Canterbury, Christ Church, prior and convent / Into Thomas de
Gravesende's presentation of Richard atte Welle of Lullingstone

(Kent), priest, to the church of Pett next Charing (Kent), vacant by the resignation of William Michel. Clergy of the deanery of Charing are named as attending" CCA-DCc-SVSB/II/143/1 – dd 9 Jul 1349 <Thomas de Gravesend kt occ 1343-50 as patron of Nurstead dioc Rochester>

1364 – "From 1364 to 1379 one named Roger Newlond was patron of the advowson of Pette Church" (AC 15:xlix)

1385 – small benefices not paying tax – in Charing deanery – Pett, 5 marks (Mon Ang 1:91)

1424 – Thomas Blyton chaplain admitted as rector of Pette (Reg Chichele 224)

1429 – William Leche chaplain admitted to rectory of Pette vacant by death of William <?Thomas?> Blyton – patron William Colfe of Westwell (Reg Chichele 254)

1430 – John Wellynge chaplain admitted to rectory of Pette – patron William Colefoll (Reg Chichele 268)

1431? – "Grant by William Colfell? of Westwell to Richard atte Leghe of Westwell and William, his son, of lands and rents as specified in Westwell parish and the advowson of the church of 'Pette'. No date." CCA-DCc-ChAnt/M/335 – "Four leaves containing copies and drafts of apparently unrelated grants and accounts, but written in a single <mid 15th-century> hand." – the dated documents run from Oct 1431 to Oct 1432

not mentioned in Reg Bourgchier

1511-12 – archbishop Warham's visitation – deanery of Charing – church of Charing – two entries mentioning Pett (Maitland 1846:665—6, Wood-Legh 1984:192—4):

"That the chapel of Pett belonging to the said church is not repaired, and is in great decay. – The Vicar of Charing appeared, and stated that the chapel had been repaired.

That the Vicar of Westwell asketh of the parson of Charing three shillings by year of the parsonage of Pett. – Sir Richard Sheppard, proctor for the Rector of Charing, said that he was not bound to pay the three shillings, and that he was ready to answer the compert at the common law; to which therefore the Commissary remitted him."

not marked on Simonson's map (1596) – which does show derelict churches, if they were recently derelict

not listed by Somner (1640:514) – but a note written by Somner into his personal copy of the book (now in Canterbury Cathedral Library) adds Pett to the list and gives the dedication as St

Blaise – he does not say how he knew that, but information of this kind comes, most often, from wills

not mentioned by Philipott

not mentioned by Hasted

no wills cited by Hussey (1907)

From all this I gather that Pett church existed before 1100 and was still in existence after 1400. It was a very poor church, with (no doubt) a very small parish – but it was an independent church. The advowson seems to have been a loose piece of property, the ownership of which did not run with the ownership of any nearby manor. By around 1500, things had changed: the parish had been merged with Charing, and the church had been demoted to a chapel. This means, I suppose, that one of the fifteenth-century archbishops bought the advowson, waited for the incumbent to die (or resign), and then annexed this parish to its very much larger neighbour.

At the time of archbishop Warham's visitation, two questions came up. Who was responsible for keeping the chapel in repair? (The vicar of Charing seems to have accepted that he was.) And should the pension of three shillings formerly paid to the vicar of Westwell by the rector of Pett now be paid to him by the rector of Charing? (The vicar of Westwell thought that it should; the rector of Charing thought otherwise and invited the vicar to sue him.)

As to the site of Pett church, the indications seem to be that it was somewhere between Charing and Westwell, on the Charing side of the boundary. There does exist a ruin or mock ruin here, just to the east of Pett Place (TQ 9648), variously regarded as a medieval chapel or an eighteenth-century folly. I would be willing to believe, provisionally, that this ruin represents Pett church. (In other words, I have come to think that perhaps Gordon Ward was right all along and that I was wrong to query his identification.) But the question still seems to me to need some further work.

Apology (May 2013)

In the first version of this paper, written before I had looked at the record of archbishop Warham's visitation, I made the very diffident suggestion that Newlands chapel (TQ 9348) might perhaps be Pett church under another name. As I said it might, that suggestion turns out to be completely wrong. I withdraw it, with apologies to anyone who may have been misled by it. Newlands chapel is still a puzzle (who built it? when? why here? and how was it connected with Leeds priory) – but it is a puzzle by itself, not to be mixed up with this one.

References

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G. Ward, 'The lists of Saxon churches in the Domesday Monachorum, and White Book of St Augustine', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 45 (1933), 60—89.

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