

Nicolas Battely
Cantuaria sacra
London
1703

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An Account of the Chappel in Dover-Castle.

Folkestone, Nov. 18. 1702.

Reverend Sir,

I have been to view the Church, or Chappel in Dover-Castle; venerable Ruins, but without such Marks of Antiquity as I expected to find. It is built in forma Crucis, a Tower in the middle supported upon the four inner Coins of the Building, which Coins are within-side wrought like Pillars, and form four Stone-Arches; from whence I conclude it cannot be ancients than the Norman-Conquest. Neither the Stone-Walls, nor the Timber-Roof, once cover'd with Lead, look to me, either in Matter or Form, older than the common date of our Parish-Churches. Only the Tower (which is of mixt Materials) has some Roman-brick in it: which makes me think, The present almost demolisht Church was built upon the Ruins, and partly with the Materials of some more Ancient Building, perhaps Oratory: and I am the more inclin'd to think so from what follows. To the West end of this Church, by an arched Entry of about 3 paces, is joyn'd a very Ancient Tower. This Tower without-side seems Modern, being cased with Stone, and its Top (I suppose) built new at the same time: but where the Stones were broke away I discover'd Roman-brick, and going into it found for certain that it's a Roman Building. It is built after this manner; first are laid two Rows of Brick, then for about two Foot and an half, or perhaps more (for I had no Foot-Rule with me) there is laid on a most firm Mortar of a reddish hew, thus (Stratum super Stratum) Roman Brick and Mortar, till the Walls are carried on to their just height: then there is an Arch form'd with Bricks, and only just so much Mortar as may serve to cement them. That this is a Roman Building, I believe you will make no doubt: but whether it were the Tower of some Ancient Oratory, I must leave to your Judgment. This is all appears to me upon View.

Reverend Sir,

Your most Obliged humble Servant,

John Sackette.

<By the end of the seventeenth century, this 'church or chapel' was derelict. (The tomb of Henry Howard, earl of Northampton, erected here in 1615–16 (Esdaile, AC, 47 (1935), 220–7), was dismantled and removed to Greenwich in 1696.) As the rendering fell away, the original fabric of the Saxon church became more visible than before, and the original fabric of the Roman lighthouse became visible for the first time. John Sackette saw it in 1702 (at which time the roof of the church was still in place) and recognized it as being a Roman structure: this is the account which he wrote of it for Battely. William Stukeley saw it in 1722 (by which time the church had lost its roof) – and as soon as he saw it knew exactly what it was. – C.F. May 2010.>