

TENTERDEN AND ITS CHURCH
TOWER.

To the Editor of the Kentish Express.

Sir,—I shall be glad if you will allow me to make a few remarks on this subject. I do not quite admit that I make light of the legend of Tenterden church being the cause of the Goodwin Sands, because I agree with many of your remarks in your "Saunter" series, that very often there is a certain amount of truth underlying a legend which may account for its origin, but at the same time, legends are legends, and many, if not most of them, are founded on nothing more firm than the Goodwins themselves; and if there is really anything at all in the above saying, it certainly referred to a far older tower than that now existing, and of which nothing whatever now remains. The present noble tower, the subject of so much congratulation in Tenterden and neighbourhood on its successful restoration, was undoubtedly built temp. Hen. VI. and Edw. IV., or, in other words, the third quarter of the XV. century. This is supported by the fact that about this period, there are in the wills of Tenterden folk, many references to the building of the same. By the kindness of a fellow member of the Kent Archaeological Society, I have a considerable number of abstracts of the wills of old time parishioners of Tenterden, and from these I append a few notes relating to the erection of this grand old tower, and from which I have formed the opinion expressed in your editorial notes in last week's "Express."

The earliest bequest to the building of the tower is that by William Cok (or Cob) of Tenterden, d. 1449. He gave to the making of the new bell tower, 5 marcs (£3 6s. 8d.) to the reparation of the church 6s. 8d., and if any of his daughters died unmarried, her share of 10 marcs (£6 13s. 4d.) was to be divided between the work of the new tower and the Chapel of Ebony. An interesting bequest is that of Henry Esteagh, of Tenterden, made in 1461, who bequeathed "To the work of the new bell tower twelve pieces of my best timber, standing and growing at Botford, in a certain wood there, near the garden called Botford garden, which the Wardens of the work or the parishioners there shall choose." Richard Berne, of Canterbury, who d. 1463, gave to the building of the new bell tower at Tenterden 6s. 8d. Thomas Petlesden, who was the first to occupy the office of Bailiff, or chief magistrate of Tenterden, after its incorporation by Hen. VI. 1449, gave one hundred marcs (£66 13s. 4d.) to the building of the tower, and at his decease in 1463, desired that the amount remaining unpaid should be paid off yearly as long as the 'Stepille was a werkyng.' Joan, wife of William Pyers, of Tenterden, d. 1471, also gave to the work of the new tower of Tenterden, 5 marcs; while John Tilar, who died the same year, gave but 3s. 4d. to the tower, but larger sums for other church purposes. One more and I will close. Thomas Strekenbolde, who filled the office of Bailiff of Tenterden in 16 and 21 Edw. IV. and 1 Hen. VII., by his will made in 1496, directed his son John to wholly build and complete within three years after his decease, the small stair turret on the north side of the tower, for the purpose of giving access to the roof, which intention it fulfils to the present day. This bequest is also interesting in that it enables us to fix within a year or two, 1496—1500, the date of the erection of this little tower, or vice, as Thomas Strekenbolde termed it in his will.

Trusting these notes may be of some interest to your readers.—I am, yours faithfully,

A. H. TAYLOR.

22nd January, 1912.

THAT this happened in Tenterden on Friday afternoon.

THAT a sale took place on the "village green" of the scaffolding, which had for over three years adorned the church tower.

THAT a number of the inhabitants of Tenterden attended the sale to purchase firewood.

THAT this ecclesiastical wood, however, met a better fate.

THAT there were bidders present with souls above firewood, and good prices were forthcoming.

THAT there was one buyer, however, who found a bargain.

THAT included in the sale was a pole of some twenty feet or more in length with a history.

THAT this length of wood has led a lonely, solitary existence.

THAT for ages past it has rested its weary limbs on the top of Tenterden church tower.

THAT it is well known, that in days long, long ago, a beacon light was shown from the top of this tower.

THAT this pole is reputed to be the very one from which the light was suspended.

THAT this relic of the past was knocked down for the gigantic sum of eighteence.

THAT it is well the pole cannot speak.



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Writing to the Vicar of Tenterden, Mr. Taylor says:—"I enclose a few extracts from wills of old-time parishioners of Tenterden and hope they might be interesting. I like to think that the tower was undoubtedly built more by their own efforts than the monks of St. Augustine." He might be wrong, the writer adds, but he points out that the abbey was in a low state and much in debt during the later half of that century and therefore he did not think they would have done much towards the building of the grand old tower of Tenterden. The tower was erected during the third quarter of the fifteenth century and in a great measure by the parishioners, who gave both help in manual work as well as money.