

THE "STONEING CROSS" OF DOWSING'S  
JOURNAL,

AN INQUIRY INTO THE MEANING AND APPLICATION OF THE  
TERM, WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE ANCIENT STONE  
CROSSES OF IPSWICH,

COMMUNICATED BY

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It is not a little surprising that no real attempt has been made, as far as I am aware, to investigate the term "Stoneing Cross," which has come down to us in the well known "Journal" of William Dowsing, the Parliamentary Visitor, who, acting under a warrant from the Earl of Manchester, did so much damage to our Suffolk Churches (1643-44). Probably those who have been struck with the expression, have contented themselves with the bare conjecture that a cross of stone only is meant, and that it is immaterial of what character; while it may be that the very term as it occurs again and again, surrounded by circumstances of uncertainty, only favours this surmise. It is quite time that we should, if possible, arrive at some satisfactory conclusion with regard to its meaning and application, and this perhaps can be best determined by reference to the established usage of the time, and in no place so suitably as that of our own county of Suffolk.

The first impression I had on becoming acquainted with the term, was that a particular kind of cross was referred

to, but as a mere conjecture it was valueless alone. It remains with me still, but has been considerably strengthened by the discovery in old records of the *very* term, applied in the *exact* way in which my predilections had inclined me, and this, I think, goes far towards clearing up the difficulty. On the contrary, any other allusion to a Cross of a recognised different character, I have chanced to meet with, is quite as precise in its designation of another kind, making it apparent, I think, what the acknowledged custom was in the matter. The term "Stoneing Cross," I am inclined to imagine, is synonymous with a wayside, churchyard, or similar erect Cross of Stone, set up for the main purpose of inspiring devotion, and perhaps to answer some useful end beside. Altogether I trust that in working out the subject on unexplored ground, which, I must confess, is of a somewhat frail nature, I may not be accused of drawing inferences of a too general character from insufficient premises, it is far from my desire to do so.

There is no need to dwell upon the deep-rooted objections that every Puritan had to any representation of the emblem of our faith, whether "in glass" or "of iron," "of wood," or "of stone." That it was an object of special aversion is too well known, and accordingly the Cross was demolished wherever practicable *sans cérémonie*. This was done to a large extent at a time following immediately on the Reformation, but as a rule, one form of Cross in particular, that generally known as the wayside or churchyard Cross escaped destruction, only, however, to fall a prey later on to the indiscreet zeal of the Puritan faction. It seems probable that much of the mischief in this respect was wrought ere Dowsing entered upon his special work, and this would account for the want of exact reference in his Journal to this phase of spoliation. Indeed so thoroughly was the design carried out, that there is scarcely an instance in the whole of Suffolk of even the remains of such a Cross existing, though many beautiful and interesting examples are to be met with elsewhere. Suffolk at one time must have

abounded with them, and there is every reason to think that the old Crosses of East Anglia were inferior to none for elegance and beauty. However this may be, they have long since disappeared, and, speaking generally, even where they have been known to exist, we are left in ignorance as to the date of erection and the general character of the structures.

The term is used by Dowsing six times, orders being given by him to take down a "Stoneing Cross" at Washbrook, Needham Market, Haverhill, Copdock, Capell, and Bedingfield. The "Stoneing Crosses" destroyed at these places are said respectively to have been "on the top of the church," "on the chancel," "on the outside of the church," and "on porch, church, and chancel." Although I am not prepared in any one case to say that the expression "Stoneing Cross" can be applied to such a cross with strict propriety (for clearly reference is made to gable or pinnacle crosses); I am nevertheless inclined, in the face of this to assert, that I believe the term was more *especially* applied to a standing Cross of the kind we usually denominate Wayside or Churchyard Crosses, and being so often used in connection with these larger erections, came to be used by Dowsing to denominate that, which although of a totally different character, so far bore resemblance to the other, in being of the same material, and therefore in the truest sense, a "Stoneing Cross." That in each of the cases mentioned the Cross was "of stone," and is therefore termed a "Stoneing" or "Stonen Cross," no one needs to have any doubt.

The Reformation encouraged and developed the Saxon element of our tongue, and the affix *en* became far more general than it is now or likely again to become. Instances of adjectives in *en* formed in substantives will readily occur to the mind. '*Stonen*' among other similar adjectives has now fallen into disuse, it has an ugly sound to a cultivated ear, but formerly it was without doubt frequently used. It is now quite natural for us to say "a Stone Cross." Not so, however, "a Wood Cross." "A

Stonen Cross" and "a Wood Cross" would not now be used by us in describing a cross formed of either material. The careless way in which our forefathers spelt their words a century or two ago, quite regardless of precedent, will help us to understand that the path which lay between a "Stonen Cross" and a "Stoneing Cross" was one of the easiest that could possibly be taken.

Again, I think it extremely improbable that the term "Stoneing Cross" would be used in the ordinary way in such an indiscriminate manner as some might be led to suppose, to designate any kind of cross, without the slightest distinction, and moreover, for my own part, I can readily understand that the term as applied in Dowsing's '*Journal*' arose in great part from ignorance of an expression, the precise meaning of which was by no means clear even to those who made use of it. In the only other instances in which I have met with the term, it has been applied according to what I believe was its received acceptation, viz., to these large erect stone crosses, and not otherwise. For instance, in the earliest Register Book belonging to St. Matthew's Parish, Ipswich—an extremely interesting volume by the way—I find the following among the burial entries:—

- I. "1564. Md that a murdered mā unknowne whoe laye wounded at the Stonng Crosse and there deptd and was buried 2 Maye."
- II. "1589. A pore wench from Ward's at the Stonnge Crosse ye xxv of Januarie."

In the old Churchwardens' book of the same parish, the same "Stonnge Crosse" is probably referred to in "a Cattalogue of all the wrighting that belong to St. Mathew's parwich in Ipswith" (*sic*) as appears from these entries:—

- III. "A Deede of Sale of a House nere Ston=Crosse made from Joseph Poole, senr. and junr. sould for £11 to Susan Scott, of Ipswich, in 1659."
- IV. "An Indenture from Susan Green, of Arrington, for the Sale of the House near Ston=Cross, being 33 foott in length and 12 foott in breadth, sould to Robert Bell, a Tanner, in Ipswich, in 1668."

Nothing is now known of these deeds or the houses alluded to, beyond this bare mention of them.

The following from the Court Books of Ipswich (14th July, 1603—1st James I.) probably contains an allusion to the same "Stoning Cross." The entry was occasioned by the ravages made by the much dreaded plague which visited the town in 1604, and with a view of taking extra precautions against the dire sickness making further inroads among the people:—

- V. " \* \* it is agreed that there shall be warding ev'rie daie in the weeke at the places hereafter named, att Stoke Bridge, att Handford Bridges, att Mr. Durrell's House, and att Stoning Crosse, by two sufficient householders at ev'rie of the said places, who shall examine such men as are suspicious or to be suspected for bringinge the sicknesse into the Town; &c."

This last entry favours the supposition that the 'Stoning Cross' stood in some prominent position in the outskirts of the town, probably in the neighbourhood of the main road from London, known still as the "London Road," in the parish of St. Matthew's; and here travellers would halt on their way to and from the metropolis. Evidently the Cross was a kind of resting place, and may have served as a preaching cross, erected, perhaps, at the expense of one of the several well known monastic establishments. The murdered man, in 1564, fled, in all probability, to the Cross for refuge from the fierce attack of some robber. These crosses, we know, were often regarded as places of sanctuary, and robbers invariably respected them, provided the cross could first be reached. The poor fellow probably trusted to the clemency of his assailant, but was sadly mistaken; or he may have crawled to the cross from the place of assault, that he might die there, as recorded in the register. The "pore wench from Wards" (at whose inn she had probably for a time sojourned)) dying at the "Stonng Crosse" was evidently on her journey, and resting at this wayside cross, in the highest sense "finished her course."

We are sufficiently assured of the position, it may be, of the chief among these stone memorials, as to speak of it with absolute certainty. I refer to the cross erected in 1510, by the famous Ipswich citizen, Edmund Daundy, and which stood in the immediate vicinity of the Town Hall. This, although usually termed a "market cross," is *not* identical with the curious old wooden structure with cross and dome supported on Doric pillars, and surmounted by the figure of Justice; it is a strange and unaccountable mistake, into which most writers and others have fallen, in thinking that it is so, and I am glad of this opportunity of pointing out the error. Daundy's Cross was, without doubt, a stone cross pure and simple, consisting perhaps of a stone shaft only, and little else, except in the way of ornamentation. It was most likely demolished within a hundred years from the time of its erection, when the cross, made familiar to us by the engraver's art, was erected mainly at the expense of a townsman, Mr. Benjamin Osborne (or Osmund as it is sometimes given), who was probably influenced in his generosity by very different feelings to those that moved Edmund Daundy to the like act.\*

Daundy's Cross was perhaps built upon a spot which had previously been occupied by one of those more ancient crosses known to have been erected on various sites in the town, with the object of marking out into divisions the wards and leets which at an early date were thus distinguished, viz :—East Gate, West Gate, South Gate, and North Gate, like in this respect to Bury St. Edmund's, where the four so-called 'Town Crosses' are known to have stood in similar positions. There were other crosses besides these, as is evident from the records in the Town Books, specifying the various boundaries, where it is stated that "Eastgate extended from the Northgate on the east side down Brook-street as far as a Stone Cross called Lewy's Cross—probably some kind of memorial—and taking a turn to the left reached as far as the Common Fosse near the Friar's preachers; with Cary-street, Thing-street, and Caldwell," (or St.

Helen's-street.) The utility of such crosses as furnishing accurate and reliable data in determining boundaries, &c., is obvious, they, however served, not merely as landmarks and signs, but, in all probability, were mainly intended for the purpose of assembling the people together, to hear from the lips of the preachers of the various orders the doctrines they were so assiduous in promulgating. In another entry in the Municipal Records, made in the 19th Edward IV. (1479) mention is made of the *round crosse* which stood somewhere between the Town Ditch and the Black Friars Bridge; it most likely was one of those crosses used to denote the precincts of some religious house or other, of which there were several in Ipswich. This is all I have been able to discover respecting the stone Town Crosses in Ipswich, properly so called.

As to Churchyard Crosses, the information is of the most scanty description. That a cross formerly stood in St. Margaret's Churchyard is evident from an expressed desire to be buried near it, but doubtless a handsome stone cross adorned the entrance to each several church. The following, however, furnish sufficient proof that crosses were formerly erected in the churchyards belonging to St. Peter's and St. Nicholas'. In 1508 (December 7th), William Harecourte directed in his will "My body to be buried in the churchyard of St. Peter. \* \* Also I give to the said Church a Crosse, to be made according to the Crosse in St. Nicolas Churchyard or better, and that to stand over my buryal or grave." In 1522, Jois Steward desired that his body might be "buried in the Churchyard of St. Peters on the south side of the Crosse." Every other mark of the former existance of these ancient Stone Crosses has been, either by the ravages of time or the wilfulness of man, effectually obliterated.

The Cross of past days formed a central spot in mediæval life around which successive generations gathered, either with superstitious reverence to say an *Ave* or a *Pater*, to wrangle over some purchase or sale in noisy mart, or to mingle in game and dance in true English style. Raised by the piety and devotion

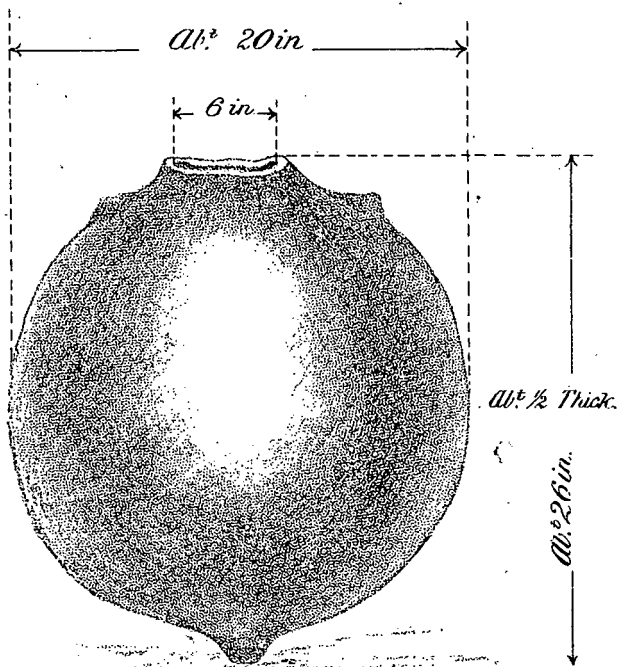
of our forefathers, and sustained by their immediate successors, those who came after them rejoiced that they were in a position to destroy, as they did in a most ruthless fashion, these material adjuncts of a system they held in abhorrence. Apart from all this, these ancient memorials of a departed period, as they cast their dark and long drawn shadows o'er some quiet retired spot, must have lent a charm to the scene, and moreover served to mark with a forcible solemnity the silent onward march of time. But, *tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis*, the substance and the shadow have alike fled, and the once familiar roadside Cross may no longer be regarded by us either as a witness or help in matters of religion, or as a refuge and guide to the wearied and perplexed wayfarer, and all circumstances considered, we are content it should be so. *Suum cuique.*

I have only to add in conclusion that if this paper shall in any way serve to elucidate a matter of some interest and as I think of no little importance, the purpose with which it is written will be fully answered.

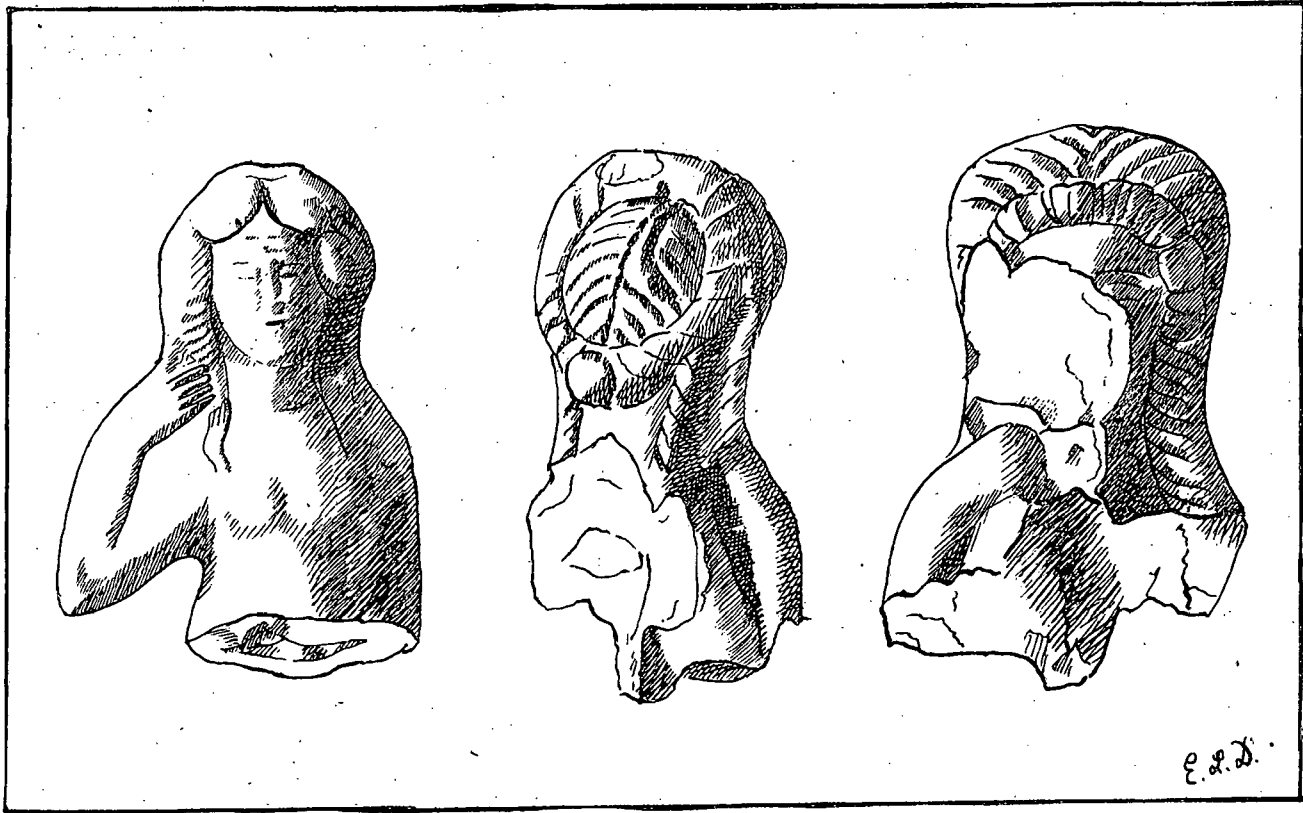
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\*This "Market Cross" was built entirely of timber, and at the time of its demolition in 1812, was in such an excellent state of preservation that its removal was effected with some difficulty. It was octagon in form, measuring some 27 feet in diameter, and supported by eight pillars, above each of which certain coats of arms were carved, among them the arms of the town, and of the well-known families of Daundy, Bloss, Sparrowe, and Longe. Beside these there were two tradesmen's marks, with the initials C. A. and B. K. M. On another shield was the following inscription:—"Benjamin Osborne Gave 44 poundes To the Building of this Cross." The Cross was surmounted by a figure of Justice, presented by Francis Negus, Esqre., who represented the town in Parliament in 1717, 1722, and 1727, and from whose seat at Dallinghoe the figure was brought. To the top of the figure the height of this Cross was about 50 feet. There are several entries in the town books with regard to the building of the Cross, &c., from one of which it appears that on the occasion of the proclamation of Charles II, the town, to commemorate the restoration of the Stuarts, had the Cross richly painted and gilded.





Amphora found at Hawke don. Suffolk.  
January. 1880.



Terra Cotta Figures found in an earthen Vessel at Hawkeston.  
Original Size.