

# Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History.

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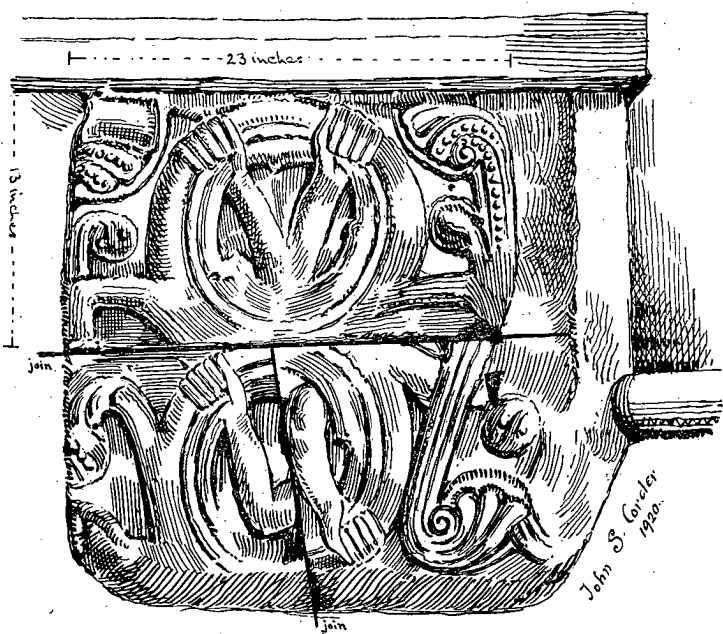
## SUFFOLK "DANE STONES."

Hitherto there has been known, to the best of my information, but a single "Dane Stone" in the county; this is in Halesworth Church and is always spoken of in the singular, though there are really representative portions of three, plastered together. "The oldest relic in the building is in the south east angle of the chancel; it is a large fragment of a pre-Norman memorial stone, on which are sculptured hands grasping concentric rings; the ornament is possibly of Danish origin." (Bryant's Suffolk Churches, 1912, p. 51); there is a somewhat poor photo of this memorial in Lambert's 1913 "Records of Halesworth." The sculpture shows two naked hands and fore-arms, right and left, firmly clutching a rough circle, with central cable; on either side is a diverse design of stiff foliated line and three or four series of small bosses or elevated circles, primitively crocketed. Immediately beneath this stone and apparently part of it are two other halves, which seem to be the sinister moieties of stones of nearly identical design, since both represent the right arm only. "Human hands and arms were favourite objects of Scandinavian sculpture" (cf. Proc. Soc. Antiq. 2 ser. ii., p. 229; Suff. Inst. iv., p. 215; etc.) Such hands, gripping a circle are said to typify their owners' devotion to the eternal faith. These three stones were discovered

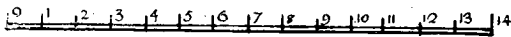
thirty years ago just south-east of the east pillar of the south seu St. Louis' Chapel; and this position suggests to me that they were not unlikely in the foundations of an early church wall, since I am not aware that aisles were ever attached to churches during the Saxon regime. They were sent to the British Museum, who pronounced them to certainly be Scandinavian work, and most probably of the time of King Guthorm I. 870-890 occupancy of East Anglia. A similar stone is said to be preserved at the port of Blyth in Northumberland, a circumstance of interest in view of the proximity of our Blyth River to Halesworth.

Respecting the age of this church, the east end of the chancel shows at its north corner distinct pre-Norman long-and-short work above the spring of the original roof, which is still visible in the vestry wall. This spring Dr. Raven considered to be in its original position, rising to scarcely above the present east window. If such be so, the above Saxon stones were probably rebuilt into their present site from the north-east angle of the church, when its Perpendicular buttresses were added; though their first situation is uncertain, the Saxon origin is, I think, beyond question. And the more especially so, since other stones of the same period are also rebuilt into the existing tower.

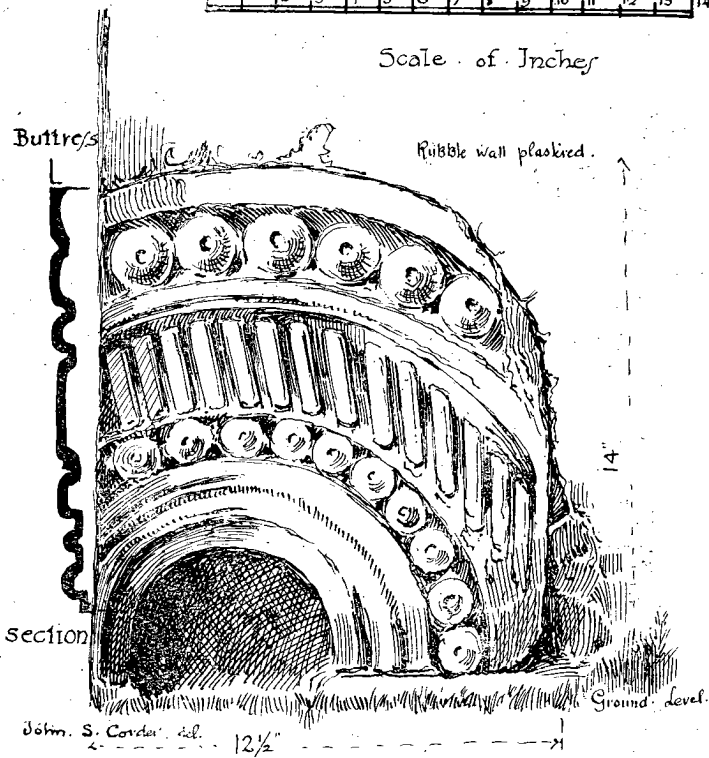
Very little is known of Christianity's extent among King Guthorm I.'s Viking Norsmen. The Pact of Wedmore certainly enforced its adoption by them; but "in spite of this adoption the bishopric of Elmham remained for some time in abeyance [Searle in 1899 could find no bishop here between Cunda of 836 and Ælfred of 933]; but a little light is thrown on the conversion of East Anglia by the dedication of an early church at Norwich to St. Vedast, the Flemish saint



Old Stone Halesworth Ch.  
*Suffolk*



Scale of Inches



Hunston S. Michael Suffolk - October 12<sup>th</sup> 1920

whose name was probably introduced by Grimbold [Saint Grimbeald, abbot of Newminster, died 8th July, 903. Dict. Nat. Biog. xxiii., p. 252], and his followers in King' Ælfred's later years. On the site of St. Vedast's at Norwich has been found an interesting monument; the shaft of a grave-cross carved with dragons in the style of Scandinavian art, and dated by Bishop Browne about 920. At Whissonsett (see an article by W. G. Collingwood, in Trans. Norfolk Archæol. Soc. xv.), and at Cringleford in Norfolk are remains of other grave-crosses of a somewhat later type, showing influence from Mercia" (Collingwood's *Scandinavian Britain*, 1908, p. 102). The next king, Jorik, was certainly a Pagan; and it was necessary for Eadweard of Wessex to make a new treaty with his successor, Guthorm II., who was the last king of the Eastengles, whereby the latter abjured heathenism, in 906.

The object of this note is to bring forward the presence of a second Suffolk "Dane Stone," which name is misleading because these earlier Vikings were Norsemen and utterly distinct both in race and language from our later Vikings of the first quarter of the eleventh century; and it should be especially noted that the late Saxon sculptures at Wordwell, Ipswich St. Nicholas, I think Holton St. Peter, and a very few other Suffolk churches, form an entirely distinct subject and show real Danish influence. The second of our Norse stones I happened to discover during August, 1920, in an inconspicuous position at Hunston Church, on the southern bank of a rivulet—once a broad sheet of water, giving name to Badwell village—running east from the Blackbourn River near the middle of the County. The font here is not, as described by the Parkers, octagonal but circular and quite unadorned, with a broader base resting upon three pillars. The tower, Perpendicular and low

(hardly forty feet in height) with brick putlog-holes, has no buttresses which is always a sign of Saxon origin. Both nave walls batter internally, a similar sign; and both, externally, have herring-boned and very level rows of common stones. The chancel is later, rebuilt, and plastered over; built into its north wall at the east end and flush with the ground is the subject of this paper, partly concealed by a modern buttress. This is a small arch; and from its peculiar sculpture I am sure it is of Norse workmanship of the early tenth century, probably of Jorik or Guthorm II.'s reigns, 890-921. The basal idea is the popular Scandinavian concentric circles, beginning with two immediately enclosing the arch; above these is a row of ten (visible) small round bosses like those in the Halesworth foliated design, below another of fourteen cylindrical bosses, which are semi-circular in section; these are surmounted by a third concentric circle, and a fourth crowns the whole, while between these outer two circles is a row of six larger round bosses with the centre of each slightly depressed.

May I suggest that so valuable a relic be more carefully preserved?

CLAUDE MORLEY, F.E.S., F.Z.S. &c.  
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*25th August, 1920.*