

Proceedings of the  
SUFFOLK INSTITUTE  
of  
ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY



Volume XXXVII part 4

1992

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# PATRONAGE, PERSONAL COMMEMORATION AND PROGRESS: ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, WESTHALL c. 1140–1548

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LITTLE IS KNOWN of the origin and early development of countless medieval churches. Precise dating of fabric is daunting and frequently a loose reference is the best that can be achieved. The transference of style from centres of innovation and influence out to rural outposts is uncharted, and the speed of such transference can only be surmised, for yesterday's creation in such a centre might be tomorrow's trend in the deepest recesses of the diocese. If style is difficult to attribute to within half a century or so, a ground plan may present greater problems and wider variations in dating, for much of the original lay-out has been razed and an unknown quantity of evidence lies concealed below ground level. Initially, therefore, dating has to be very broadly based. Yet it is precisely because style *was* transferred, ground plans *were* reproduced and sculpture *was* copied that the task of dating can be made more exact by comparing similar structures within an area. An interpretation of a building and its development, therefore, cannot be considered in isolation.

It may be possible to date an important ecclesiastical building from documentary evidence alone, but how can this be done for rural churches situated in parishes for which few records survive? The identities of early patrons have long since been forgotten and master masons and their workshops go unknown. National records may name landowners and land holders, but this does not necessarily mean that they underwrote building expenses in one of many parishes within which they held land. On the other hand, local records can be invaluable for revealing building activity in progress at a certain time. Early churchwardens' accounts are excellent, but there are relatively few surviving from the late-medieval period and there was precious little building immediately afterwards when accounts were more numerous. Pre-Reformation wills have been used for identifying building projects in parish churches through the bequests of parishioners, although very often such projects were the result of communal efforts rather than individual patronage. On the other hand, there must have been many corporate efforts to which testamentary reference was never made. Gifts of goods and money left to specific building enterprises or for furnishings and fittings benefited the parish and the parishioner who, for a small legacy, could expect prayers to be said for the good of his or her soul to hasten the passage through Purgatory. Such evidence when it is found is precious, even though fabric and fittings have been replaced by reformers, restorers and converters. Yet although pre-Reformation wills may seem to be a happy hunting ground to those setting out with the intention of laying bare a parish history, the majority of testaments leave no mention of bequests, for much was given during the parishioners' lifetime and much that was intended to be carried out 'post mortem' had already been arranged before their demise. Given a church with evidence of structural change, however, it is possible to assess the development even though it may not be possible to determine what factors brought this about. When visual evidence is endorsed by written records, appreciation is the greater because human achievement is coupled with human interest.

St Andrew's church, Westhall is a prime example of earlier fabric surviving to show progressive building in a late-medieval church. As successive generations enlarged and

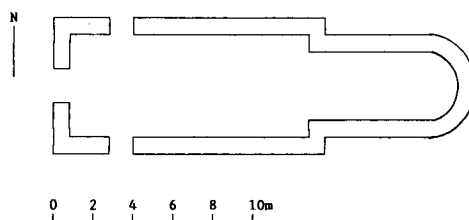


FIG. 49 – Westhall Church: the 12th-century two-celled building comprising nave and chancel. The apse is conjectural.

adapted the building, they did not totally obliterate what had gone before, for although flint walling is easy to remove for the insertion of a new window, for example, alterations are difficult to conceal. Westhall is therefore an important instance of a developed church rather than a planned church of one build, as at nearby Southwold. Much of this development can be seen from the outside of the church, since the external fabric alone tells a story of continuous progress from the 12th to the 16th century. Yet this progression is not consistently supported by documentation. Remaining records are few and many details are missing. Nevertheless, sufficient references survive to explain certain problems both inside and outside the building, although there is much that remains insoluble. The siting of the church, in the south-west corner of a churchyard raised above a narrow lane, lessens the initial impact of the south facade, which holds vital clues to the architectural history of the church. The components of the church – south aisle, nave, south-west tower, arcade, chancel and north porch – are here studied chronologically in order to appreciate the phased character of the building.

#### PHASE 1

*The south aisle* is a Romanesque structure comprising the nave and part of the chancel of the 12th-century church (Fig. 49). The south doorway lies close to the west end of the church (Fig. 50). From the sculpture here, and from that of the west facade, the church could be dated to between 1140 and 1150 (the decoration on the west facade is discussed later). The outer frame of the south doorway is composed of double broken-billet moulding and is comparable to the north doorway at Haddiscoe in Norfolk, which has a full frame of double broken-billet (this doorway was transposed in a later rebuilding), and the north and south doorways respectively at Wissett and Henstead, Suffolk, both with full frames of triple broken-billet. Within this outer frame there are three recessed orders. The first has impost blocks and scallop moulding above. This is continued down the jambs with knobs in the inverted 'V' of the scallops and hatched chevrons on the outer side. The second has cushion capitals and plain moulding, while the inner arch has impost blocks and plain moulding. To either side of the doorway at ground level there is stratification, that painstaking method of laying flints in straight lines used by the Saxons and continued by the Normans through most of the 12th century (Pl. XXII). Similar stratification can be seen at Redisham church in the neighbouring parish, at Henstead church, six miles north-west of Westhall, and to particularly good effect in Fritton's 11th-century apse in the north-east of the county. There is no evidence of disturbance in either the stratified layers at the base of Westhall's south doorway or above the doorway, and it is therefore 'in situ', unlike the north doorway at Haddiscoe. The random flintwork of the wall surface above the stratification shows refacing at a later date, and on the east face of the tower there is



FIG. 50 – Westhall Church: the south doorway, drawn by Henry Davy in 1811 for his *Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk*, 1827.

evidence of re-roofing. Stratification runs almost the length of the present aisle and ends in quoins, from which rises a vertical break in the wall fabric.

This section of the south wall represents the south nave wall of the Romanesque church. Two Perpendicular windows of three lights with staggered, battlemented transoms are 15th-century insertions, the westerly window inserted over, but not entirely occluding, an earlier window frame. This was probably an early 14th-century window with Y-tracery, and the existing measurements would suggest a window of perhaps 3m high by 1m wide, but as voussoirs are missing the measurements cannot be accurate. A tracery stump 3.5cm wide remains in the lower frame.

If there had been a central tower, it would have stood at the vertical break in the south wall. There is now little in the remaining fabric to suggest that this was the case. Central towers are rare in the area, Oulton and St Mary's, Gillingham being the nearest to survive. In the locality, surviving Romanesque towers are common, but are circular and are situated at the west end of a church. The siting of Westhall's square 14th-century tower over the west face of this Romanesque building is an afterthought. It could indicate that it replaces an earlier tower or, alternatively, that in the early period the church had no tower. Following the latter possibility for the moment, the quoins and wall break would mark the Romanesque respond or straight joint returning to the chancel. This would mean that the wall was 'squared off' in the 15th century when the third Perpendicular window was inserted. This window is now blocked and the section was resurfaced in 1881, but the fabric still contains Romanesque corbel stones scattered at random.

It is more than probable that Westhall had an apsidal chancel like Heckingham and Hales in south-east Norfolk, Fritton in furthest north-east Suffolk and Wissett (previously with an apse) two miles to the west. The east wall of the south aisle is now rectangular, with a five-light, Perpendicular window similar in style to those in the south wall, although the upper tracery appears to have been replaced. On either side of the east window, stone quoins arise. The impost block remains on the south side, and the curve of a Romanesque arch can be seen in the fabric break above, probably the original chancel arch. The marks of a gable above the later Perpendicular window could be seen earlier this century (Bond 1913, 251, Pl. 2), but are not now visible. Below and to the south of the southern quoins are remains of a flint and rubble foundation just over 1m in width, comparable in depth to both the Romanesque south wall and to the west wall (which can be measured inside the building). Abutting this foundation at ground level are several quoins, embedded in the wall, forming a straight joint. Meanwhile the quoins to the north of the window have been returned to form the outer frame of a later door, perhaps the private entrance of a chantry priest, and they are not in their original position. The depth of the east wall measured through the chantry priest's door is 0.87m.

Inside the church, the south aisle is divided from the nave by an arcade of five bays. A doorway, with a round-headed window above, is set in the west wall of the aisle. The doorway is approximately 1m wide and 2.13m high. The wall at this point is 1.7m deep. Beyond stands the tower which has protected the stonemason's craft on the west face of the Romanesque church for five hundred years (Fig. 51).

The doorway has five recessed orders, of which three have undecorated engaged shafts with cushion capitals, and on one pair of capitals the scallops are inverted. On another pair there is a finely etched fish-scale pattern. The central order has a roll chevron with a knob in the indented 'V', which is also found at Stoven. Elsewhere the lower orders are heavily encrusted with chip-carving, some of it closely related to Henstead, Haddiscoe, and a doorway in Norwich castle. The abaci are undecorated. The outer arch is made up of cable and double broken-billet decoration. Next lies a composite arch of beasts' heads in the centre, very similar to those at Wissett, touching but not overlapping the roll moulding

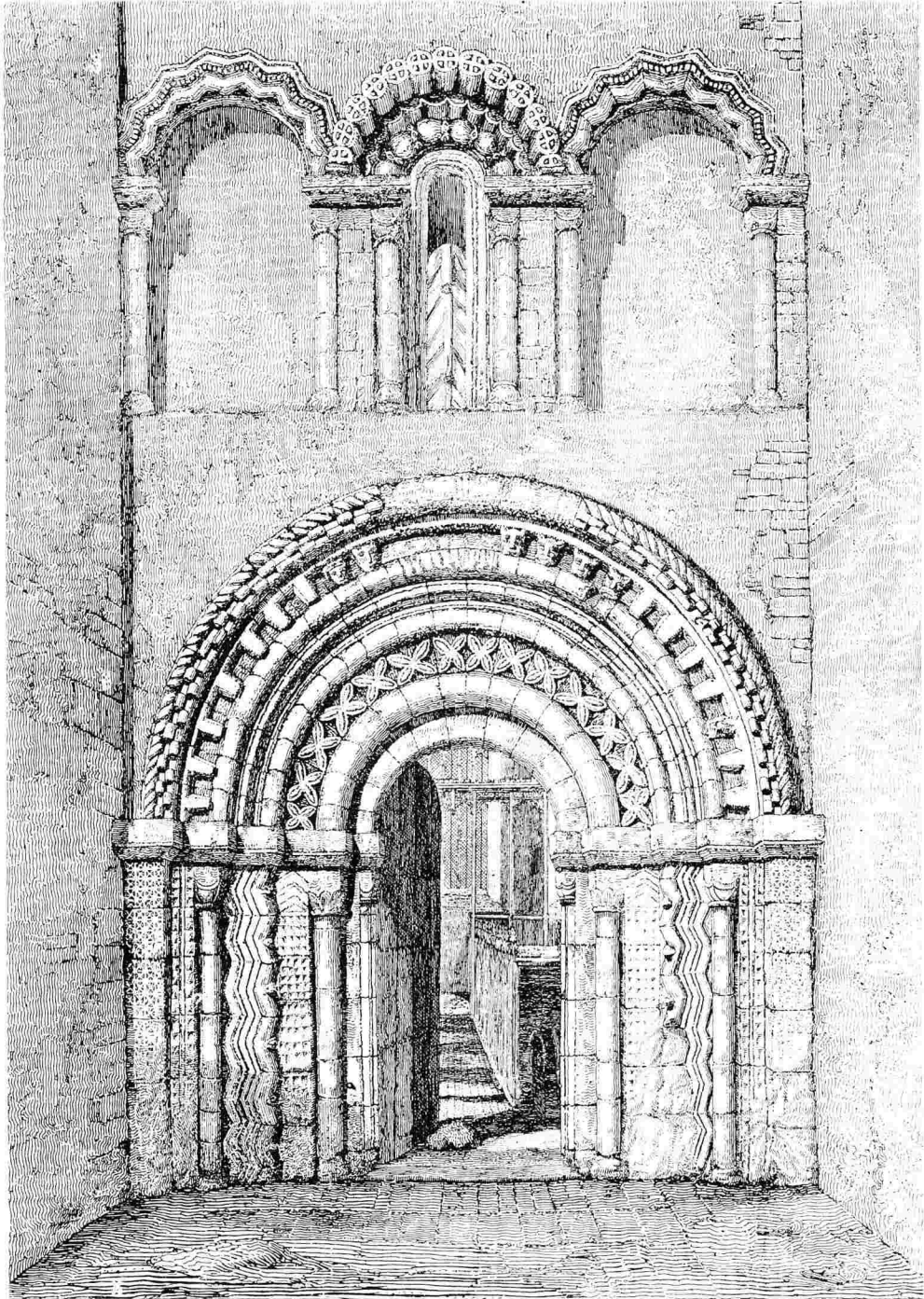


FIG. 51 – Westhall Church: the west doorway with tripartite arcade above, drawn by Henry Davy in 1818 for his *Architectural Antiquities of Suffolk*, 1827.

below. On either side of these lie nine tapered blocks or labels, which can be seen again at Kelsale (but of inconsistent size), at Framingham Earl and Binham Priory in Norfolk. A plain roll and hollow arch follows. The decoration consisting of four-petalled flowers, set above the recessed inner arch of roll moulding, is not found elsewhere in the immediate vicinity. Above the doorway there is the narrow round-headed window, with an inner arch of bobbins as at Hales and a middle arch of cylindrical motifs set on edge, which also appear at Kelsale. This last motif is found at Gillingham in Norfolk and at Norwich Cathedral, although these examples lie like inverted troughs. The hood mould has wheels identical to those at neighbouring Redisham and similar in conception to decoration across the Waveney at Hales, Heckingham and Framingham Earl. On either side, the blank arches have roll chevrons with a ribbon of beads above, supported on blank shafts and cushion capitals.

The sculpture of the Westhall doorways, while showing close relationship to other Romanesque work in the area, is eclectic. An identical motif may be found in churches nearby, for example the roll chevron with knob which also occurs at Stoven. Yet similarity of style need not necessarily appear in adjacent parishes. The wheels above the central window at Westhall with quadrupartite divisions, for example, can be compared to similar motifs, with eight compartments lying on a chamfered projection, at Framingham Earl and again at Wymondham Abbey.

This corpus of motifs is repeated in the Yare Valley school of sculpture. Within the area of the Lower Yare valley in south-east Norfolk, bounded by the Yare to the north and the Waveney to the south, there are twenty-nine 12th-century doorways bearing profuse decorative sculpture. It appears that this school of masons copied designs from work executed at Norwich Cathedral, Thetford Priory, Castle Acre and Durham *c.* 1120–45 (Harris 1989, 152–74). South of the Waveney in north Suffolk there are at least fourteen churches with Romanesque doorways bearing motifs of the same provenance, and the north Suffolk group appears to be the work of the Yare Valley school. Perhaps for the purposes of this publication it should be termed the Waveney Valley school! There is no single motif in either of the doorways at Westhall that can be precisely dated by comparison to a major building. The wheels in the upper arcade on Westhall's west facade resemble, but do not copy, those at Wymondham Abbey which seem to be derived from Durham *c.* 1133. Erring on the side of caution, the sculpture at Westhall could be dated *c.* 1150. It seems likely that at Westhall, at least, the Caen stone was carved before transportation to the site. The underside of one of the inner arch blocks is decorated with a chevron, and it is difficult to believe that a mason working on the spot would have been unaware that he was carving in the wrong plane!

It is the west facade of Westhall, in particular, which suggests that here is a building of importance. Romanesque west doors are not common. Those bearing Yare Valley sculpture occur at Aldeby in Norfolk, founded pre-1135, and the Lazar Chapel, Norwich. In the locality, Romanesque doorways with an upper tripartite arcade just do not exist. It may be that they have not survived. For example, there is no record of the appearance of Blythburgh church prior to rebuilding in the 15th century. Blythburgh was a royal manor in 1086 and Roger Bigot also held a manor there. Could it be that the 14th-century tower at Blythburgh originally cloaked a Romanesque facade similar to that of Westhall?

And what of patronage? Harris points out that at the time of Domesday Book in 1086, Roger Bigot held Thetford and South Lopham, both showing evidence of Yare Valley sculpture. Within the valley, Bigot's holdings supported more churches than the holdings of any other landowner, although only one of these churches now bears evidence of Yare Valley sculpture. In addition he held a further six manors in which no churches are referred to in Domesday. Nevertheless, the six churches subsequently built show Yare



Valley motifs (Harris 1989, 170–71). In Suffolk, Bigot held the manors of Darsham, Kelsale, Redisham, Stoven and Theberton. By 1220 the Bigots also held the manor of Wissett, which included the churches of Holton and Spexhall. They held manors in Ilketshall. All the churches associated with these manors, with the exception of Darsham which is bereft of identifiable design, show Yare Valley sculptural motifs. Perhaps of more significance is that Bigot in 1086 also held the manor of Brampton, which lies immediately to the east of *Westhall* which does not feature in Domesday Book. Patronage, however, is difficult to determine exactly. There are many churches in this cohesive group straddling the Waveney which cannot be related to the Bigot family holdings. Perhaps decorative cohesion should be attributed to transference of style rather than to patronage, although the origin of the style may well have stemmed from ecclesiastical buildings on manors held by the family of Bigot.

The first documentary problem is that *Westhall vill* does not appear in Domesday Book. The parish must have developed post-1086 and was presumably part of a larger entry in the Domesday account. By 1844 it comprised 2,316 acres on the 'Tithe Map' (Fig. 52). The western boundary of the parish runs parallel to Stone Street, the Roman road lying half a mile further to the west. Part of the northern parish boundary was the boundary between the pre-Reformation deaneries of Dunwich and Wangford and the boundary between Blything and Wainford Hundreds. The parish is bisected by a tributary of the river Blyth, which runs (ran) below the church, and lies above and in a gentle valley running from west to east. To the north of the parish is a second water course flowing towards the north east.

There is nothing to indicate that the earliest church fabric extant at *Westhall* is pre-1140, yet it is of sufficient note to suggest that it replaces an earlier timber church on the site. Should Phase 1, as just described, begin *c.* 1140–50 or, in reality, should it be described as the second phase? Most churches were founded by the 11th century and it is

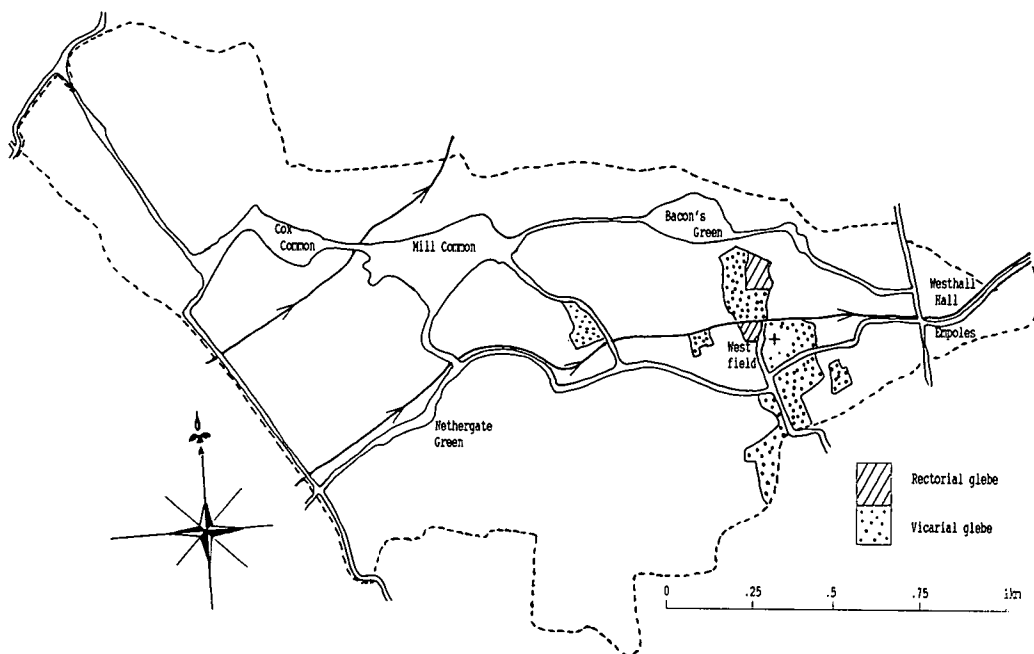


FIG. 52 – The parish of *Westhall*, from the Tithe Map of 1842 with additions from a map of 1666.

perhaps unlikely that a church of such quality would have been built on a virgin site in the 12th.

St Andrew's church may be concealed in another Domesday entry for, within the immediate neighbourhood, the villis of Blythburgh, Reydon, Wrentham and Frostenden all had more than one church recorded in 1086. The siting of the church, too, could imply a building date before the creation of the parish, for it lies to the south-east of the parish, close to the now wasted sites of Westhall Hall and Empole's manors. Apart from these two manors which lay on the south-west boundaries of the parish, there were two additional manors, Bacon's (alias Wingfield's) and Barrington's, which were situated more centrally. Ultimately, under the Bohuns in the 16th and 17th centuries, all four manors were encompassed by the manor of Westhall Hall.

Today the church is situated in an isolated position, but the great Westfield, which lies in the angle of the two roads south-west of the church, has yielded 13th- and 14th-century pottery during field walking, indicating adjacent habitation during the late medieval period. Nevertheless, the church was firmly surrounded by a generous portion of glebe land with little chance of a village growing in the vicinity.<sup>2</sup> The Tithe Map shows the common lands of Nethergate Green, Cox Common, Mill Common and Bacon's Common, comprising together 125 acres, lying some distance away from the church, while farmsteads stood scattered on the edges of the commons and on the ridges above the valley.

## PHASE 2

*The nave* appears to have been added to the north wall of the Romanesque building at the beginning of the 14th century, but this is not proven and what is left to identify the age of this new building is scant. There are no original windows. There are no records. On the north wall there are four capped buttresses 66cm deep, without plinths. There are no obvious building breaks in the external fabric and therefore it has to be presumed that it was built in one piece.

There is evidence of an early window, of which a small portion of frame remains in the west wall, but this has been cut into by a Perpendicular copy, similar in style to the south aisle windows. A second blocked window, measuring approximately 2.67m high by 1.58m wide, with tracery stumps suggesting Y-tracery, is partially obscured by the 16th-century porch. Two Perpendicular window insertions, with tracery plainer and the execution less costly than their contemporaries in the south aisle opposite, light the 14th-century nave. The north door, within the north porch, has a hood mould and male and female label stops of *c.* 1300. If nothing definite can be proved about the patronage of the Romanesque building, less can be said about the 14th-century nave, for nothing remains to denote whether the building in its original form was of special quality.

Internally, as externally, there is nothing in the nave that helps to identify its age more precisely. The traces of the blocked window embrasure can clearly be seen adjacent to the north door, but as mentioned previously, all other windows have been replaced. A wall painting depicting St Christopher has been cut into by the insertion of the most westerly Perpendicular window. The roof appears to be late 15th- or early 16th-century, arch-braced with collars, and a fretwork cornice and fretwork spandrels between the collars and the ridge. Of the twenty possible corbels, only seven headless angels remain (an eighth sits headless and alone on a window-sill), crudely carved with monstrous hands holding shields painted with a floral design, or crowns. One has a portative organ.

So far there is no documentation from which to date the building progress accurately. It is known that Westhall was vested in the Crown at the time of King John, but it is not

known whether it had been vested elsewhere in the 12th century and subsequently confiscated. Could the Romanesque building therefore be a creation of the Crown? In 1215, John granted the town of Westhall to Nicholas of Dunwich. The manor of Westhall Hall had passed to Hubert de Burgh by 1229, the same year in which Westhall market was founded by charter of Henry III. De Burgh, Justiciar of England, was High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1215 and from 1217 to 1225. De Burgh also held the manor of Sotherton in the neighbouring parish. After his death in 1247, Westhall Hall manor remained in the family until 1275, when it passed to the Le Parkers (Copinger 1905–11, VII, 186–87). To complicate matters further, prior to 1314–15 the advowson of St Andrew's church was held by the Abbot and Convent of Humberstone in Lincolnshire. It is not known from what date they enjoyed the patronage or how they had acquired it, but by 1291 Westhall was one of four rectories held by the Humberstone brethren (*V.C.H., Lincolnshire* 1906, II, 131–32).

### PHASE 3

Although *the tower* in its lower stages appears, from the two trefoil-headed windows on the west face, to be 13th-century, the clue to the true dating must lie with the diagonal 14th-century buttresses. These are jointed into the tower with reflexed quoins, and a continuous sill runs along the base of both tower and buttresses. The string course above wraps around the west front and both buttresses only at the lowest level, a good example of window-dressing. An inverted Romanesque window-head has been used in the rubble facing. The north and south walls of the tower are not bonded into the nave and aisle walls. In the higher stages of the tower there is a full string-course, above which there are windows, now wooden-slatted, with tracery stumps which suggest former Y-tracery. In 1818, Henry Davy illustrated the interior tower chamber vaulted and plastered.<sup>3</sup> From the early 16th century there are two bequests to the new bell. The battlemented top has a late, simple flushwork design and may have benefited in part from the 6s. 8d. bequeathed 'to the reparation of the church steeple in Westhall' by Robert Coove in 1541.<sup>4</sup>

If the plan of the original church is taken to be that of Fig. 49, the enigma of Westhall is compounded by the addition of the present tower at the west end of the Romanesque church, covering the west door. The position suggests that when the tower was built, the Romanesque structure still represented the body of the church. Yet the new 14th-century nave and the tower must have been built, if not contemporaneously, within a few years of each other. Does this mean that the 14th-century tower was a replacement for an earlier tower? It is highly unlikely that a Romanesque church of such quality would have been built without a tower in the first place, but before such a possibility is examined, what is certain is that by the time the present tower was built, the great west Romanesque door was redundant. Whether there had been a north door in the Romanesque church is not certain, but a north entrance was supplied by the one seen today in the 14th-century nave. It is not known to what extent great liturgical processions took place in small rural churches, but from the time the present tower was erected the north and south doorways sufficed, as they did in the majority of parishes.

### PHASE 4

Between the nave and Romanesque aisle is a *five-bay arcade* with double chamfer moulding. The octagonal piers, with low bases, have scroll-moulded capitals and are thus 14th-

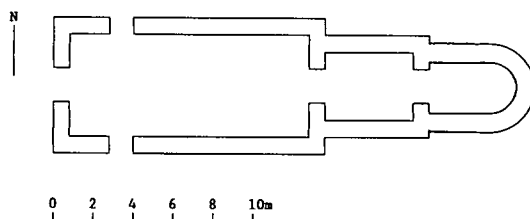


FIG. 53 – Westhall Church: the 12th-century three-celled building comprising nave, central tower and chancel. The apse is conjectural.

century. The two eastern bays of the arcade are narrower than their counterparts. The moulding of their capitals is reflected in the capitals of the chancel arch, but is not identical to the three westerly capitals. This suggests a break in building progress. The eastern respond has a niche for some long-lost image and perhaps marks the site of the gild altar dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The arcade wall at the west end is 76cm deep compared to the Romanesque south wall which is 1.7m deep. A total rebuilding of the arcade wall seems the most likely explanation here, although this is unusual, for arcades tended to be inserted *into* existing walls rather than causing wholesale demolition.

But at this point doubts, which have hitherto not been expressed, have to be considered. If the nave was of one build as indicated by the external north nave wall, why does the arcade suggest a halt in building progress? Is it coincidence that the vertical break seen in the exterior south aisle wall lies in a line between the piers with dissimilar capitals? Although the subsequent interpretation may appear simple, the work and expense involved must have been enormous.

Instead of indicating the return to the chancel as seen in Fig. 49, the vertical break in the south aisle wall could mark the return to a central tower which was narrower than the nave (Fig. 53). The south-west corner of the tower would therefore have been level with, but recessed from, the vertical break. The north-west corner of the tower would have stood at a point between, but set back from, the third and fourth arcade piers which have different capitals. The east tower-arch leading to the chancel would then be represented by the skeletal arch-form remaining in the east wall of the south aisle. If the fabric stump on the east face indicates the southern foundations of the Romanesque chancel, the adjacent quoins embedded in the fabric at ground level could be the return of the south-east corner of the tower to a chancel narrower than the tower. The ground plan suggested by this hypothesis was a common one in the Romanesque period (Rogerson 1987, 75–78). Furthermore, in a building of such obvious quality and expenditure, an axial tower could be expected (Fig. 54).

Now the building progress has to be postulated. At the beginning of the 14th century, an extensive building programme was launched which possibly took fifty years to complete. In a parish containing four manors there were perhaps four independent benefactors with four individual pockets who could underwrite much of the expense. It may be that the prospective change of patronage, from a depressed and impoverished abbey in Lincolnshire to the wealthy Prior and Convent of Norwich, encouraged the parishioners to expand their church. Whatever the answer, the new nave was completed and the western arcade built on the foundations of the Romanesque north wall as far as the north-west corner of the central tower. This phase of building may have been accomplished between 1300 and 1315 but, if the prospective change of patronage caused the new nave to be built, it is more likely that the building programme did not commence until after 1305, and may have begun as late as 1314.

## ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, WESTHALL

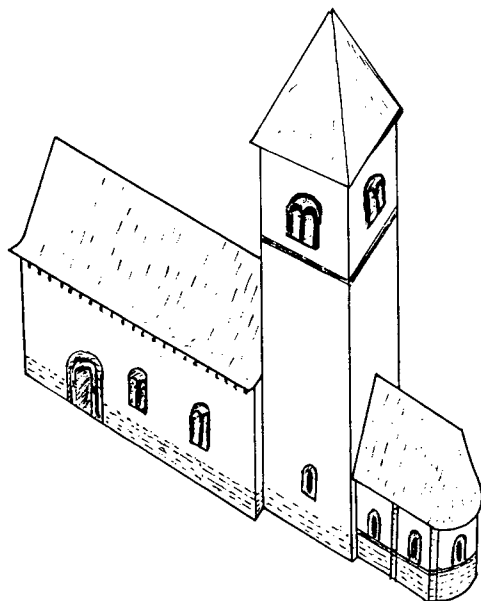


FIG. 54 – An impression of Westhall Church in the 12th century, based on a three-cell plan (not to scale).

There was now a break in building the arcade while the dismantling of the central tower took place. The dismantling of the tower was accompanied by the demolition of the Romanesque chancel. This had to be removed to make room for the new chancel to be built by the new patrons. When building recommenced on the arcade, the two most easterly bays had to be fitted into the predetermined space left by the destruction of the west tower-face. This could account for the variation in the bay widths. It could also explain the similarity between the capitals of the chancel arch and the two eastern piers which would have been completed in the final stages of rebuilding. It also explains the siting of the new tower over the Romanesque west facade, for who would wish to block out the west window in the new nave so soon after its completion?

### PHASE 5

*The chancel* stands higher than the nave and is flint-built (Pl. XXIII and Fig. 55). It is supported by three lateral buttresses to the north with two diagonal buttresses at either corner, all devoid of flushwork, and with a continuous sill at the lowest level. The string course on the buttresses differs from that on the tower, being moulded above and deeply undercut beneath. The diagonal buttresses are joined to the chancel by reflexed quoins, similar to the bonding of the diagonal buttresses to the tower. This again reinforces the opinion that the tower is 14th-century. The east window is reticulated with five lights and below, the plaque of consecration is still in place, defaced and illegible, reminiscent of the plaque at Trowse. The priest's door on the south wall has an ogee arch and the hood mould, surmounted by a carved head, terminates in label stops. The doorway is flanked by buttresses. The two 14th-century windows on the south wall diagonally mirror the tracery in their counterparts on the north wall. Thus there are two windows of three-light, reticulated tracery and two windows of three lights with a cusped-ogee octofoil within a

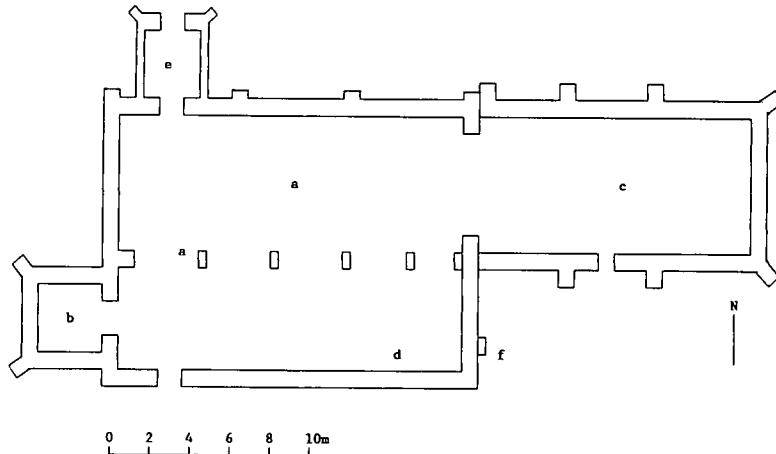


FIG. 55 – Westhall Church: the final development, showing the addition of (a) the 14th-century nave and arcade; (b) the 14th-century tower; (c) the 14th-century chancel; (d) the ‘squaring off’ in the south aisle; (e) the 16th-century porch; and (f) the fabric stump, presumed to be the remains of the Romanesque chancel wall.

circle superimposed on the reticulation. The north-east window contains fragments of reassembled medieval glass. The chancel was ‘attended to’ by the Victorians and there has been some replacement of quoins, but on the whole it appears to have emerged into the 20th century relatively unscathed.

The chancel inside is only 3m shorter than the nave and approximately the same width. It is lit by the five Decorated windows. Immediately the similarity to its parent the Canary Chapel, outside the west door of Norwich Cathedral, is apparent, although the scale of Westhall is smaller. The Decorated east window filters the light through the reticulated tracery and, to the right of the altar, a piscina with marks of a previous moulded arch is in the same Decorated style. There is a simple sedile and an aumbry.

The scissor-braced, seven-canted roof is mortised into the collars. The bosses are unremarkable except for that set in the middle of the chancel roof where it straddles the space between two collars. Perhaps it cannot strictly be called a boss. Nevertheless, it carries the emblem of the Holy Trinity, the dedication of the chancel’s patron and builder. It depicts God the Father, enthroned behind and above the crucified Christ, but the Holy Spirit, usually portrayed in the form of a dove, is not present (Pl. XXIV a). The cornice of the roof is crisp and well-preserved and is probably a replacement. Amongst the general jumble of cornice motifs, which are fairly prosaic and appear in no recognisable order, are the cross of St Andrew and the arms of Norwich Cathedral, although it is difficult to identify the latter absolutely without its tinctures. As a second emblem representing the Convent of the Holy Trinity, however, it is likely that it does in fact represent the patrons of the chancel. The roof may have been reworked at some time as many of the timbers have nail marks on them, presumably to take a lath and plaster ceiling (the scissor-braced roof of the Canary Chapel had a plaster ceiling as late as 1864). The building of the new chancel necessitated the removal of the Romanesque apse, and what remained of the Romanesque east end was probably given its rectangular form at this time.

Safe documentary ground is reached by 1316. It is from that date that precise patronage can be ascribed to the chancel, and the identity of the patrons, the Prior and Convent of the Holy Trinity, Norwich goes a long way to explaining the sheer size and quality of the building. As has already been mentioned, the advowson of Westhall had been held by the Abbot and

Convent of Humberstone, but on 16 April 1316 Edward II gave permission for the advowson of Westhall church to be assigned to the Prior and Convent of Norwich.<sup>5</sup> The revenues of Westhall were to provide stipends for four chantry priests for the Bishop of Norwich.

The Bishop at this time was John Salmon. He had been promoted to the see in 1299, had played his part as an international statesman and was made Chancellor of England in 1320. In 1316, some nine years before his death, he founded a chantry for the good of his soul and the souls of his parents and his predecessors and successors in the bishopric, to be commemorated in perpetuity within 'that chapel dedicated to St John, Apostle and Evangelist lying in the west part of the Cathedral' (Dodwell 1974, 153). This was the Carnary Chapel, now Norwich School chapel, and it appears that by 1316 it was already built. Why Westhall was chosen to provide the endowment for the chantry priests remains a mystery. It had become available for transfer, however, because Humberstone's monastic buildings were destroyed by fire in 1305. The already impoverished brethren were forced to realise one of their assets and Westhall was alienated to Norwich (*V.C.H., Lincolnshire* 1906, II, 131-32). A charter of 1314 quotes 120 marks as the price.<sup>6</sup>

The first vicar of Westhall to be appointed by Norwich was Thomas de Burgh, instituted to the vacant living on 9 November 1316, and he was expected to be resident within the cure.<sup>7</sup> The endowment of Westhall vicarage was to be maintained from all offerings and oblations of the altar, from mortuaries and legacies of the church, from petty tithes and personal and mixed tithes, the tithes of corn of every description alone to be excepted. The demesne lands remained to the vicarage (Fig. 56). Meadows also remained, with the exception of a piece of land

called Schepecotelond lying near to the Church on the west side (between which land and the Church there is a common way). And it contains three or more acres

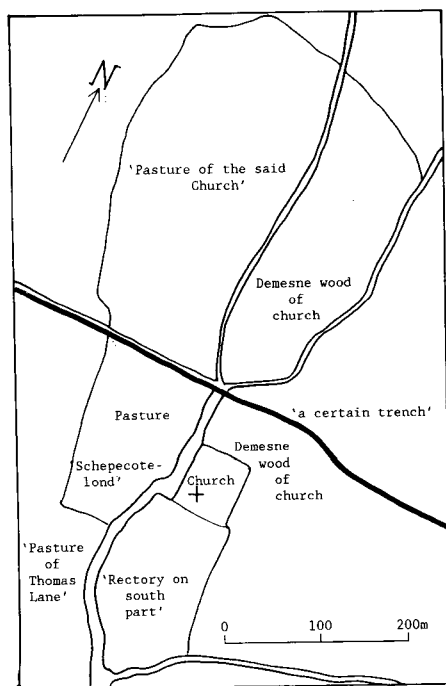


FIG. 56 – Map showing the glebe land mentioned in the partition of 1316: a reconstruction based on the original charter and the 1842 Tithe Map.

and the north head of this land abuts on the pasture of the said church and another head upon the pasture of Thomas Lane of Westhall, which piece of land we assign to the Prior and Convent, in their capacity as rectors, on which to construct an adequate building for themselves (Saunders 1932, 56–61).

This building was probably a barn (MacCulloch 1976, 68). The vicar was granted

the demesne wood of the said Church lying on the north side of the same Church, the which is divided into equal and just divisions by a certain trench extending from east to west, we wish the south part to be allocated to the Vicar and the north to the said Rectors free from all demands of tithe and with free ingress and egress.

The vicar was to have the Rectory on the south part, with all buildings and appurtenances, and was subject to ordinary taxes incumbent upon the church, except 'the construction and reparation of the chancel, in which matters we wish the said Rectors to be burdened'.

This was a prophetic phrase. In 1327 the income from Westhall was £24 13s. 4d. In 1338 it was £13 8s. 4d. and by 1340 it was down to £4 19s. 8d. Throughout the 15th century it averaged £13.<sup>8</sup> The Chapel with its equipment of robes, vessels, books and ornaments was to be maintained by the Prior out of the proceeds of the Westhall property. The stipends were limited to 22½ marks, of which the master of the priests was to have 6 marks and the other priests 5½ each. A portion of the revenue went to provide winter gowns for the convent and the residue went to the *Magister Celarii*. With £10–£15 being paid out to the chantry priests every year, there was not much left for the Master of the Cellar.

Perhaps this is why the building of the chancel took some time. There are certainly few references to expenditure on the fabric and these are well spread out, but the documentary evidence is not continuous. For the years between 1327 and 1342 only eight obediatory rolls have survived, so that no consistent expenditure is evident. £5 6s. 8d. was paid in chancel expenses at Michaelmas 1331, and the painting of a panel (*tabula*) cost 8s. in 1341. (In Worstead church in Norfolk, of which the Prior and Convent of Norwich were also patrons, the painted frame of such a panel survives above the altar in the north chapel, although it is from a later period.) In that year there was also £2 16s. 8d. for a new chamber (*camera*) for Henry Cok.<sup>9</sup> This may have been a 14th-century 'site office', as Cok features as a taxpayer in the Subsidy list of 1327 and acted for the Prior and Convent as collector of tithes. In 1376, the chancel and the houses (the vicarage and possibly the *camera* referred to above) were repaired at the cost of £6 3s. 7d.<sup>10</sup> The house which lies within 'the rectory on the south part' today has a fine crown-post at its core.

The beginning of the 14th century saw Norwich at the centre of architectural innovation and development. This activity was due, in part, to the rebuilding of conventual property which had been destroyed in the riots of 1272. The construction of the cloisters for example, begun in 1297, was not completed until the 1330s. At the same time the northern precinct was improved by the building of the St Ethelbert Gate and the Carnary Chapel, both completed by 1316, and by the building of the episcopal palace slightly later.

The masons working for the Prior and Convent were the Ramseys. John Ramsey is first mentioned in 1305 when he was paid for making circular windows for the belfry. He was succeeded in 1325–26 by William Ramsey, probably a nephew, who had been working on St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster (another Ramsey had been employed at Westminster in 1294). William did not stay in Norwich for very long. To him can be attributed the chapter house and cloisters at Old St Paul's; his influence, if not his presence, touched the south transept and the choir at Gloucester; he rebuilt Lichfield choir. By 1338 he was the King's Mason south of the Trent and his brother, John, succeeded him at Norwich.



The Carnary Chapel, of course, bore a close resemblance to St Stephen's Chapel in overall form and in many details. The upper windows of the Carnary in their turn influenced the south transept windows at Gloucester (Bony 1979, 60). It is interesting, too, that circular windows were made for the Norwich belfry and similar forms, differing in detail, were used to light the undercroft at the Carnary. The Prior and Convent, as rectors of Westhall, had undertaken 'the reparation and construction of the chancel'. It can be surmised that the workshop which had produced the Carnary Chapel would also be instructed to design and build Westhall chancel. The reticulated tracery found in three of the chancel windows is not unusual for the period, but it is the cusped-ogee octofoil, set within a circle and superimposed on the reticulation, found in the two remaining windows that leads back to the Carnary undercroft and the developments at Norwich.

#### PHASE 6

The alterations to the *south aisle* and the patronage that brought this about deserve consideration. The south aisle roof is arch-braced without collars, except for one collar with a king-post in the centre of the roof. The south aisle roof is of a more expensive manufacture than the nave roof. It has a deep, well-carved cornice on the south side and alternating heads and uncarved shields on the wallposts. Few heads remain and all the shields have lost their colour. The north side had a narrower cornice, but this has lately been replaced by new wood. The construction can be dated fairly accurately and the patronage identified, not only from the roof bosses but from alternative documentary evidence.

The eastern boss represents the Agnus Dei, a rather startled looking lamb with a cross and an indistinct banner. 'IHS' decorates the second boss. The third and fourth bosses have carved shields, now without tinctures, but the carving of the third boss is sufficiently well-preserved to be attributed to Thomas Croftes of Em poles Manor, Westhall. In his will of 1474, he requested to be buried in the Chapel of Blessed Mary.<sup>11</sup> Painted on the second window jamb to the east is a crocketed gable, a surround for an image, possibly that of the Virgin Mary. This alone is not enough to ascribe the building of the roof to him but there is more evidence from the chorographer of Suffolk (MacCulloch 1976, 81):

Thomas Croftes bequeathed his bodye to be buried in the Chapell of the blessed Virgin Marie as also by the armes on the window in the same chappell which are these p'ti p' pale gules on a Chevron Argent 3 hurts azure and arg. 3 mullets sable between 2 bendlets engrayled gules, in another window eyther of these by it selfe and empaled as before and underneath, 'Orate p' a'i'abus Thomas Crofts et Johanne uxoris eius'.

The boss shield varies slightly from the chorographer's description but is too similar to be a coincidence. The Croftes' arms were gules on a chevron argent three cinquefoils pierced azure (Papworth 1874, 485, col. 2; Corder 1965, col. 203). The chorographer seems to have mistaken blue cinquefoils for hurts, which are blue roundels. The correct arms for Croftes are carved on the third boss (Pl. XXIV b). But there is another discrepancy between the fourth boss and the description of the glass window. The wood-carver produced a bend sinister rather than two bendlets engrailed, but the three mullets are correct. It is not possible to say whether the carver or the chorographer is at fault. Neither is it possible to identify the arms with absolute certainty.<sup>12</sup> A similar coat of arms, but with mullets of argent, was borne by Bumpstede of Willingham, a parish a few miles from Westhall (Corder 1965, col. 97). Joan Croftes, the widow of Thomas, left a

small bequest to Sir Robert Bomstede, priest, in her will.<sup>13</sup> In the will of Thomas Bumpstede of Norwich, written in 1445, a Thomas Croftes is named as executor.<sup>14</sup> This again seems to be more than a coincidence and it may be that Widow Croftes was formerly a Bumpstede and that she, too, is commemorated on the roof, to the making of which she bequeathed 7 marks.

The refurbishment of the south aisle was no small undertaking, and many of these alterations must have been finished by the time of Joan Croftes's death in 1477–78, although the bequest of 7 marks to the roof indicates that the work was not complete. Depending on the initial Romanesque plan, the Croftes squared off either the 12th-century chancel or the area originally occupied by the central tower to make their chantry chapel. The floor area of the chapel is reflected above by the roof bays bearing the bosses. The priest's door to the north of the side altar was probably constructed at the same time. The chapel was separated from the south aisle by a parclose screen, described by D.E. Davy in 1808 as a carved screen at the second arch from the east end, bearing four small shields, 'the colours of which are now nearly obliterated'.<sup>15</sup> The screen is no longer present. The three Perpendicular windows with staggered, battlemented transoms were inserted, one cutting into an earlier wall-painting which is indistinct but resembles the Tree of Jesse.

After the Reformation, the best pew in the church was frequently sited in a former chantry chapel. This was the case at Westhall. Two hundred years after Thomas Croftes's decease, an inscription on the fly-leaf of the churchwardens' accounts stated: 'Note yt Edmund Bohun Esq. is not chargeable to repayer of the church because he maintains the Isle in which he setts'.<sup>16</sup> The Bohun family had purchased Empoles Manor from Croftes's descendants in 1533.

#### PHASE 7

*The north porch* is the latest building visible and appears to be 16th-century. The traces of an earlier roof on the adjacent north wall of the new building indicate a previous roof, probably of thatch. The porch windows are Perpendicular with flattened arches. They are now blocked and there are signs of great disturbance of the flint fabric where the central portions of the porch walls have been rebuilt. The spandrels above the porch entrance bear the emblems of the Holy Trinity, being the dedication of the Cathedral church at Norwich (of which the Prior and Convent were the patrons of Westhall post-1316), to the east, and the Passion to the west. The porch indicates that the north door, in the 16th century at least, was the main entrance to the church and faced the primary centre of the parish. North porches are less common in churches than the more usual south porch, but then the configuration of Westhall parish was far from ordinary.

These then are the bare bones of Westhall church. Within the skeletal structure there is much in the way of fittings and decoration that has survived and is of interest. There is a fine seven-sacrament font which retains some original gesso work and much of the original colour. There are numerous wall paintings, including two consecration crosses. There are poppy-head benches. None of these can be attributed to individual benefaction or communal effort and none can be accurately dated.

Between the nave and the chancel, however, there is an example of shared patronage, a testament to material piety which bears the names of the donors. This is the lower part of the rood screen, still intact although in poor condition on the south side. Only the north screen bears an inscription painted along the top sill. The inscription (translated below) and the names of a pair of donors appear above four painted panels (Pl. XXV) thus:

*Margaret his wife. Pray for the soul of Thomas Feltham.*  
 St James the Great, St Leonard, St George, St Clement

*Pray for the soul of Richard Love and for the good estate of Margaret Alen, widow who [had this made].*  
 Moses, Salvator Mundi, Elias, St Anthony.

These panels retain good colour but the figures are squat and cannot be compared with the elegant figures on the screens of Southwold or Bramfield nearby. The south screen depicts St Etheldreda, St Sitha, St Agnes, St Bridget, St Catherine, St Dorothy, St Margaret of Antioch and St Apollonia. Here the colour is bad, the condition is worse and the screen has lost its tracery; but the figures, which are named, form a more cohesive group stylistically than their male companions to the north.

There is reference to Thomas Feltham and Margaret his wife in the will of John Feltham, his father, dated 1469. Richard Love's will was written on 6 August 1509, probate granted 19 February 1512.<sup>17</sup> His widow was Alice, still alive at the time of the 1524 Subsidy in which she appears as a taxpayer, and his daughter was Margaret, married to William Baret of Blythburgh, all of whom are mentioned in Richard Love's will. There is no further reference to Margaret Alen and she cannot be identified. As the inscription infers that Richard Love is already dead, the date of the north screen cannot be before 1512.

Although the development of St Andrew's has been described in discrete phases and associated with distinct patronage, there was a continuum relative to the progress about which little has been said. This was the regular and reliable financial support of the less affluent parishioner. Patronage and pious provision was not the prerogative of the privileged, and yet the humbler worshipper can seldom be identified. Who was Joan Crust who appears in the 1327 Subsidy, for example? What part did she play in the 14th-century development of the building? Did she bequeath goods in kind to the emendation of the church? Or Thomas Sadler, worth £1 a year in wages in the Subsidy of 1524 – who was he? Did he spare a penny for the building of the north porch in the 16th century? Perhaps the widow's mite should not be described as patronage, yet the congregation constantly underpinned not only building development but also the more mundane maintenance. The replacement of earlier windows with Perpendicular fenestration in the north wall of Westhall nave may not warrant documentation, but doubtless it was accomplished by gifts, however meagre, from the man and woman in the pew. It may be that a series of bad harvests were responsible for the building break in the 14th-century arcade, but when conditions improved work continued, the thin but constant stream of money coming from the same source.

There are forty-three wills extant for the parish from 1387 to 1541. Sixteen of these leave money varying from 20d. to £10 to the 'emendation' or 'reparation' of Westhall church, but little is known of the corporate effort required for the reparation of the church steeple, for example, to which Robert Coove left 6s. 8d. Many bequests were paid in kind, such as a coomb of wheat or a bushel of malt, to supply the raw materials for a church-ale which would in its turn raise money. Perhaps bequests to furnishings and fittings were more specific because they were more personal than donations to the 'fabric fund', hence Cecily Gyle's gift of a pair of silver cruets.<sup>18</sup> And yet despite this, the testamentary evidence is not particularly rich for Westhall in comparison to some other churches. Nevertheless, throughout the centuries parishioners of gentle and peasant birth alike gave during their lives and bequeathed at their deaths sufficient funds to build, repair, improve and beautify the church that stands today. Perhaps this is the only testament they need.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Francis Bond, summing up his attempt to elicit from the stones and mortar the story of Westhall, said, '... like all such attempts it is inevitably but conjectural; in an architectural record ... there are always gaps; fuller knowledge might impair or even wholly vitiate the conclusions that have been suggested above'. My conclusions are very different from those of Francis Bond. They are but one interpretation of the 'fuller knowledge' gleaned with grateful thanks from the Revd Christopher Atkinson, priest-in-charge of Westhall church, Paul Cattermole of Norwich School for his specialist knowledge of the Carnary Chapel, and past and present members of the Centre of East Anglian Studies and the School of Art History at the University of East Anglia, who shared their expertise and enthusiasm so unselfishly. I am grateful to Norman Scarfe for the loan of the late Angus McBean's photograph of the exterior of the chancel (Pl. XXIII), and to the Suffolk Record Office for permission to reproduce Figs. 50 and 51.

## NOTES

- 1 S.R.O.L., Acc. 163/C1/1.
- 2 From 14th- and 15th-century accounts, the vicarial glebe was 60 acres (MacCulloch 1976, 68). Thomas Goche, the vicar in 1482, bequeathed a meadow to the vicars of Westhall in perpetuity to celebrate an obit (N.R.O., N.C.C. A. Caston 263). 'A Geographical Description' dated 1666 (S.R.O.I., HB 24: 1175/2/24) shows 'gleabes lately Neales', additional vicarial glebe. By 1842, the Tithe Map (S.R.O.L., Acc. 163/C1/1) showed land belonging to the vicarage amounted to 83 acres and the rectorial glebe amounted to 6 acres.
- 3 B.L., Add. MS 19176, f. 186.
- 4 S.R.O.I., A.S.Reg. 1C/AA2/5, f. 139, Robert Cove, 1508; N.R.O., N.C.C. Johnson 244, Richard Love, 1509; S.R.O.I., A.S.Reg. 1C/AA2/14, f. 206, Robert Coove, 1541.
- 5 *C.P.R. Edw. II, 1313-16*, 271.
- 6 N.R.O., DCN 44/150/1.
- 7 N.R.O., DN/Reg. 1 Book 1.
- 8 N.R.O., DCN 1/1/30, 34, 36.
- 9 N.R.O., DCN 1/1/31, 37.
- 10 N.R.O., DCN 1/1/54.
- 11 N.R.O., N.C.C. Hubert 62, Thomas Croftes, 1474.
- 12 In the neighbouring parish of Spexhall, a light of 15th-century glass shows argent 1 mullet between 2 bendlets engrailed gules, which has been attributed to Blagge of Horringer. As far as can be ascertained, that family did not come to Suffolk until the 16th century and is therefore unlikely to be associated with Westhall.
- 13 N.R.O., N.C.C. Gelour 164, Joan Croftes, 1477.
- 14 N.R.O., N.C.C. Wylby 29, Thomas Bumpstede, 1445.
- 15 B.L., Add. MS 19083, vol. vii; f. 110; B.L., Add. MS 19176, ff. 178, 180. In the collection of Henry Davy's illustrations of Suffolk churches, there is a detailed picture of the screen. Another view of it seen through the Romanesque west doorway in Fig. 51.
- 16 S.R.O.L., Acc. 163/E2/1.
- 17 N.R.O., N.C.C. Hubert 15, John Feltham, 1469; N.R.O., N.C.C. Johnson 244, Richard Love, 1509.
- 18 S.R.O.I., A.S.Reg. 1C/AA2/8, f. 258, Cecily Gyle, 1522.

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*Abbreviations*

- A.S.Reg. Archdeaconry of Suffolk probate registers.
- B.L. British Library.
- C.P.R. *Calendars of Patent Rolls*.
- N.C.C. Norwich Consistory Court.
- N.R.O. Norwich Record Office.
- S.R.O.I. Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch.
- S.R.O.L. Suffolk Record Office, Lowestoft Branch.