

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
SUFFOLK INSTITUTE OF ARCHÆOLOGY,
Statistics, and Natural History.

THE OLD MINSTER, SOUTH ELMHAM.

HAVING heard, and read in Suckling's *Suffolk*, such accounts of this remarkable ecclesiastical relic, as stimulated without satisfying my curiosity, I availed myself in the summer of the year 1857, of an opportunity of visiting it in company with the late Mr. John B. Scott, of Bungay, and I have great pleasure in laying before the Members of the Archæological Societies of Suffolk and Norfolk, the notes which I have made upon it, with such elucidations as I have been able to obtain since.

The extremely secluded situation of the Old Minster, first requires notice. Few persons, even amongst those who are interested in architectural archæology, are aware of its existence; and most of those who do know that there is such a ruin, have been made aware of it by the occurrence of its name on the large county maps, or by the account of it contained in Suckling's *History of the County*.

It stands somewhat to the south of the middle of a nearly square precinct, which is known by the name of the Minster Yard.* The area of this precinct, I was informed by Mr.

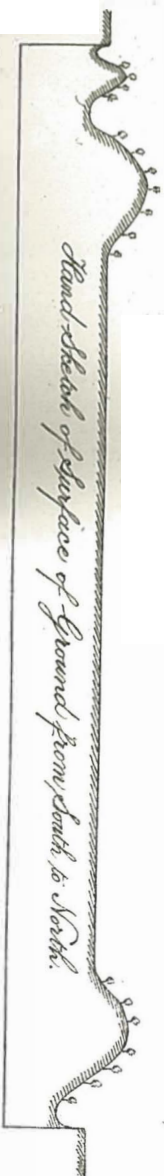
* The accompanying plan of the Old Minster and Minster Yard, from a survey made by Mr. Alger, of Diss, for the Venerable Archdeacon Lord Arthur Hervey,

and the Rev. C. R. Manning, has been liberally engraved at their cost, for the use of the Institute.

Old Minister Southwellham.



Hand-section of surface of Ground from West to East.



Hand-section of surface of Ground from South to North.

George Durrant, is about three acres and a half; and it is surrounded by a low bank and a shallow moat, which are now planted, so as to screen the ruin very effectually from the eyes of the few passers by. It is about 45 yards from the south side, and 65 yards from the north side; its distance from the east and west sides, are 45 and 40 yards respectively. Its orientation is nearly N. E. by E.

The ruin itself is 104 feet in extreme length, and the extreme breadth of it is 33 feet. It consists of three distinct parts: the first, at the western end, is 26 feet in length, with one opening for a great west door, and two openings for windows on each side; it communicates with the second part by means of two doorways, the jamb between them being opposite the western door, and making it impossible for a spectator to see through the building to the eastern end. The length of this part is 38 feet; and it had three windows on each side. It is almost open into the third part, there being no trace of any other division than what may have served as the piers to a wide arch. This third part is apsidal in figure, and is $26\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length from the arch to the trace of the outer edge of the apse. The walls are most perfect in the western compartment, and on the south side, where they are about 18 feet high. The form of the chancel alone can be traced, no walls remain.

In these three parts we cannot fail to recognize the chancel, the nave, and what was not a very common appendage to small churches—the galilee. Mr. John Henry Parker, one of our most learned ecclesiastical archæologists (whose useful work on the *Architectural Topography of Suffolk*, is doubtless well known to the Members of these Societies, although it does not contain any mention of the Old Minster), has directed my attention to the old church of Llantwit Major, in Glamorganshire, as an example of a similar plan; the church of St. Woollos, in Monmouthshire, affords another instance; and to come nearer home, the church at Gillingham, in Norfolk, is constructed in the same manner. Durham cathedral exhibits the galilee on a grand scale. Other examples might be found in this country.

Mr. Parker says that this construction is occasionally met with in France, and instances the churches of St. Benoît sur Loire and Tournus.

These galilees were not regarded, it appears, as quite so sacred as the other parts of the church; and had their name from some fancied parallel between their condition and the Galilee of the Gentiles. Sometimes the galilee was merely a porch, and there was a chamber or even a chapel over it, where relics were preserved, and exhibited on particular occasions. In some cases, the western tower itself appears to have been a sort of galilee.

There was another case in which the body of a church was divided by such a wall as we find here between the western and the central compartments of the structure; that, in which part of the church belonging to a monastery was used as a parish church. This is not a very uncommon case; but the proportion of the two parts would be the reverse of what we find it in the Minster; for here the western portion, which would represent the church of the parish, is no bigger than the chancel of what would be the monks' church. Which, I think, confirms the opinion I have already expressed, that this western division is a galilee. The plan and proportions of this Minster are interesting on another account; they exhibit very singularly the relation of the Christian Church to the Pagan Temple. An Italian gentleman, a friend of Mr. Scott, was so much struck with this fact, that on seeing our Minster, he exclaimed at once, "*A Temple!*" The three divisions corresponded so precisely to the *porticus*, *pronaos*, and *cella*, of the ruins he had seen in his own country. The plan of the cathedral, as we know, is borrowed from the Roman *Basilica* (and in Rome this very term is used as the name of a church of great dimensions); it would be in no respect surprising that the plan of the parochial church, or the chapel, should be derived from the simpler form of the Roman temple.

The plan, materials, and mode of construction, all unite in pointing to a very early period as the date of this church. Mr. Parker, and Mr. Franks (Director of the Society of

Antiquaries), with whom I have conversed and corresponded respecting it, agree in assigning it to about A.D. 1000 ; but it may be of an earlier date, although there are no Saxon tiles in the building. The galilee, the apsidal east end, the remains of the splay of the windows, the facing of the wall with uncut flints, the absence of any quoining, are the principal features that I refer to.

But now I have to speak of the most remarkable fact concerning the Old Minster. Both outside and inside may be seen rows of holes, some three-cornered, some quadrangular, which are nothing but old log-holes, left unfilled, after the removal of the scaffolding, by which the walls were raised. This could not well have arisen from any other cause than—that *the building never was finished*. An opinion which derives the strongest support from these other facts, for the knowledge of which I am indebted to Mr. George Durrant,—that although the Minster Yard has been cultivated by all the most improved methods of modern husbandry, ploughed, sub-soiled, and even drained ; although the moat has been searched and cleared ; and although the interior of the building has been explored to a sufficient depth (5 feet), to have reached the floor, if there had been one,—no floor was found, no trace of any interment, nor anything of any sort that could be deemed antique.

With regard to the name of this most remarkable church ; it must not be supposed that *minster* is used invariably to indicate the church of a monastery. It has now been clearly ascertained that it often signifies no more than *church*. Yet it is quite possible, nay, even probable, that this was intended as the church of a monastery ; and the formation of this moated area or precinct, seems very decidedly to indicate it. In this case then, the name *minster*, would be perfectly according to rule ; whilst *Old Minster* might be the designation it received after the establishment of the Nunnery at Flixton, or the Benedictine Cell at Rumburgh.

And this leads me to remark on the singular absence of documentary evidence regarding this place. Mr. Durrant,

who not only is occupier of the land on which it stands, but as steward of the estate, under Sir Robert Adair, had good opportunities of examining the records relating to it, was able to tell me no more than that the building and the precinct, are called by the names of Old Minster and Minster Yard, in all the court rolls, &c., that he had seen. Nor was I able to discover, in any of the old records in the muniment room of Flixton, which I was permitted by Sir Robert to inspect very carefully, the least fragment of information, which could either solve or direct my inquiries.

It is still however possible, that in the British Museum, or the Record Offices, some satisfactory information may be obtained.

The entries in *Domesday* relating to South Elmham, are the following; they occur in vol. ii. :—

Fol. 356. [TERRA GODRICI DAPIFERI. BISCOPEs.]
Waineforda. H. Almahā ten' Godric' lib' ho' comb.' R'..
....i. eccla.' viii. ac'. 7 v. pars. i. eccla'. vi. ac'.

Fol. 380. [FEODV' EPI^s DE TEDFORT.]
In halmeha'. i. lib' ho' cond' 7 soc' Ælman' epi'.....
.....i. æcclesia'. vi. ac'.....
Almeah' ten' Willm' de epo'.....

Fol. 380, b.
.....i. acclia'. xl. ac' lib'æ t'ræ. 7 dim.' car'.....
.....In ead' xxv.
lib' ho'es. comd' Almaro epo'.....
.....iii. æcliaē. xxx. ac'.
7 ual'. v. sol'.

There are here seven churches named as existing in *Elmham*. Flixtona, and Humbresfelda, are spoken of separately; in fols. 380, and 434 b. two halves of *the church* at *Flixtona* are specified; whilst in fols. 379 and 380, *two churches* are spoken of as belonging to *Humbresfelda*. This assuredly makes it possible that our "Old Minster" was one of the churches of Elmham, at the time of this survey.

The *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of Pope Nicholas the Fourth, under the head *Deanery of South Elmham*, contains the following list of parishes: St. James, St. Michael, St. Peter,

Homersfelde, Sandcroft, St. Margaret, St. Nicholas, All Saints, and Flyxtone; one church less than Domesday shewed as existing within the same limits.

In conclusion, I beg to offer the only explanation which has occurred to me, of the facts which I have collected in this paper. All students of Tanner and Dugdale know how very slight are the records which have preserved the memory of many monastic establishments; and therefore that none should yet have been discovered, relating to the Old Minster, is not a sufficient reason for rejecting the opinion that it was one. I think that the remains show that the foundation of such an institution was effected here, at the time when the troubles respecting the succession to Edward the Confessor, came to their height. The conventual buildings (if any had been erected at all), just as the halls of the lords of the soil, and most of the churches, in those days, would be of wood, and have, therefore, all disappeared. The church, which was to have been on a larger scale than most of those existing at that time, was commenced, but never finished, because the conquest of England by the Normans supervened; the new king took possession of the whole country, and all the wealth that would have served to complete and endow the establishment, passed into other hands; and the design of the former owners was forgotten or disregarded.

That these ruins should have survived the accidents of so many centuries, is not to be wondered at; for the whole of South Elmham was in the hands of the church; and it must be remembered that the present state of the country round it, differs widely from that in which it was till within a comparative recent period. There was no sufficient reason for destroying a building, which interfered neither with such agriculture as was practised through those ages, nor with the chase, and neither church nor dwelling-house was erected near it; or it would have shared the fate of so many other relics of those older times, the very site of which either is completely unknown now, or is preserved by some doubtful and corrupted local name. We have enough left

us to pique our curiosity, and to stimulate the endeavours of all who are interested in "the Restitution of Decayed Intelligence" respecting what we now designate the Antiquities of Suffolk; and it will afford me the liveliest satisfaction, if by this very imperfect memoir, I may suggest, or direct any more successful investigations of the history of the *Old Minster*.

B. B. WOODWARD, F.S.A.

ON THE SITE OF THE BISHOPRIC OF ELMHAM.

A VISIT I paid some years ago with the members of the Suffolk Archaeological Institute, to a ruined church called the "Minster," in the parish of South Elmham St. George, in the county of Suffolk, brought strongly to my mind some doubts I had long entertained of the accuracy of the generally received account of the location of the sees of the Bishops of East Anglia, and determined me, when opportunity offered, to look further into the subject, and state my views upon it.

I now give the result of my enquiries, and in order to render my observations more intelligible, I think it will be better to subjoin a list of the Bishops of East Anglia, from the latest authority, Mr. J. M. Kemble's list in the Norwich volume of the Archaeological Institute:—

- 1 Felix
- 2 Thomas
- 3 Berhtgild
- 4 Bisi

Elmham.

673 to 693 Beadwine
706 Northberht
731 Heatholac
736 to 742 Æthelferth

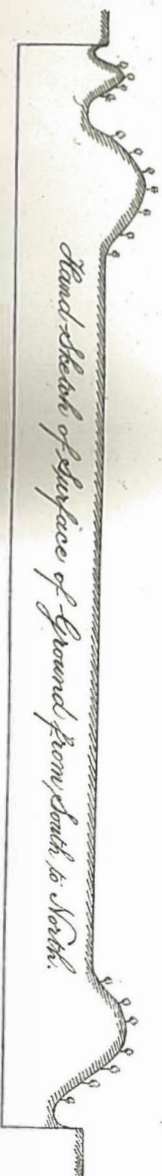
Dunwich.

Æcce 674
Æscwulf
Ærdred
Cuthwine

Old Minister Southwellham.

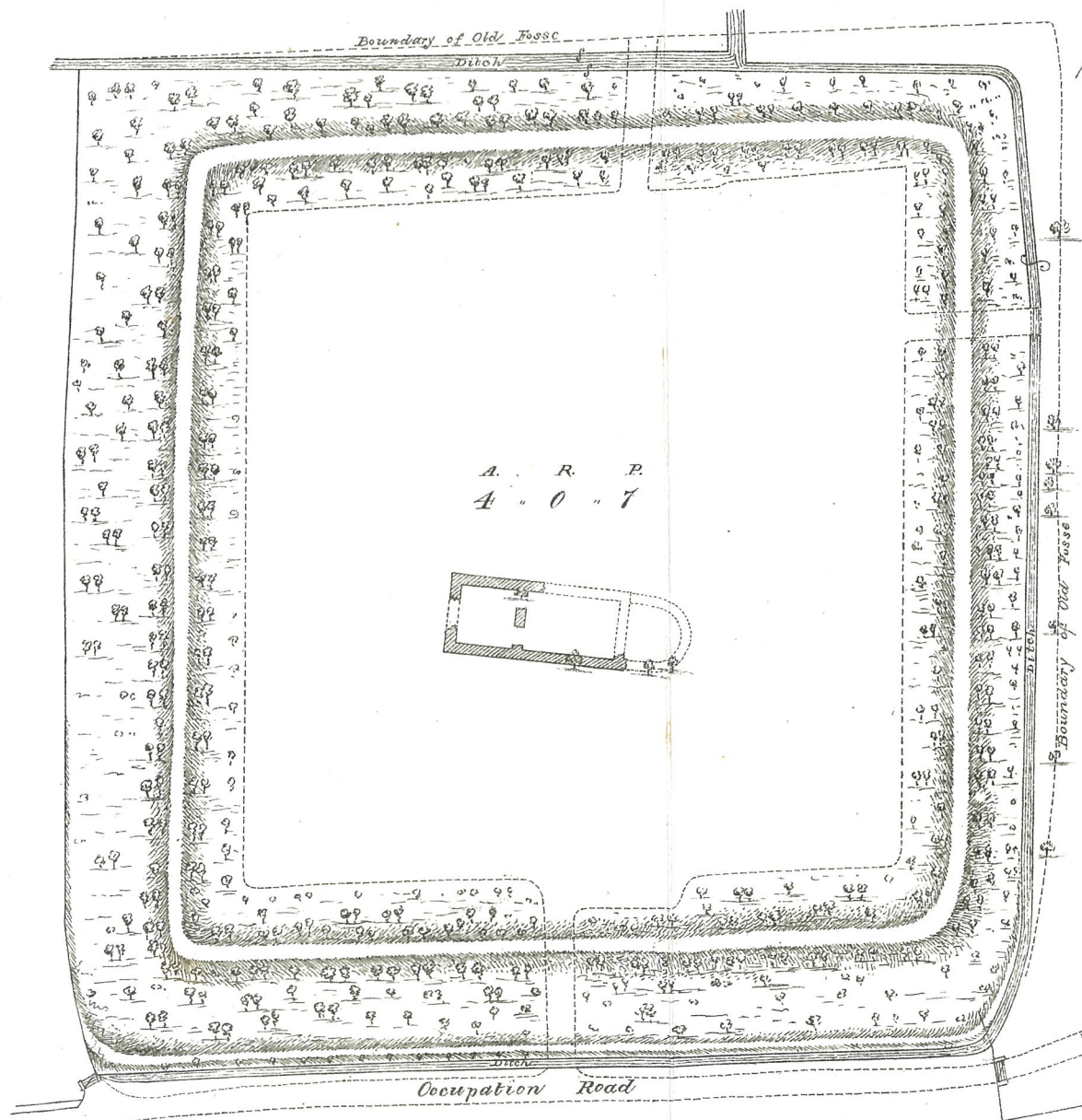
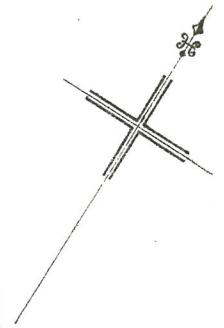


Hand-sketch of surface of Ground from West to East.



Hand-sketch of surface of Ground from South to North.

*Plan of the Old Minister's Grounds
in the Parish of
St. Cross or St. George Southelmham,
1863.*



A. R. P.
4 " 0 " 7

