

STONHAM EARL MEETING, *July 11th*, 1871.

THE LORD JOHN HERVEY, President.

Amid pouring rain, which continued more or less throughout the day, the members who were assembled at Needham Market Railway Station, started for the church of BARKING, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin. This church is work of the 13th century with some later additions; especially good is the Perpendicular screen-work, which includes a parclose in the South aisle showing remains of original painting. The aisle chapels are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and St. John; the latter has a piscina and single sedilia. The rood staircase was entered from the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the south aisle, a door in the south pier leading to the loft. The north pier is also pierced for a door on the level of the rood loft; but nothing now exists to show that a staircase led from the floor of the chapel to this doorway. The roof is a good example of the king post construction. The font, an octagon, is ornamented with the Evangelistic symbols; the stem with lions and the wild man alternately; an excellent Perpendicular cover is still preserved. The vestry is secured by two doors; the inner door has an early lock; the outer door, of two leaves, is a fine piece of wood carving. The same may be said of the south door. In the vestry were shown two flagons and an alms dish the gift of Theodosia Crawley, 1769. In the north aisle the stone mullions of one of the windows have been replaced by terra cotta, and tiles of the same material with diaper patterns have been inlaid on the splay. In the pleasant grounds of the Rectory, through which the road to the church passes, are some magnificent cedars of Lebanon, the seeds of which are said to have been brought from the Holy Land more than a century ago.

At the Chapel of St. John, NEEDHAM MARKET, which was next visited, the Rev. W. H. Sewell read the carefully-prepared paper printed at page 245, Vol. IV.

CREETING ST. MARY delayed the party but a short time. Mr. Watling stated that the tower has herring-bone work now concealed by plaster: he also pointed out a tombstone marking the site of another church, which formerly stood in the same churchyard. The south door is Norman, measuring only three feet in width. The octagon Perpendicular font had the Evangelistic symbols alternating with angels bearing shields. One shield bore the crown and arrows for St. Edmund. At the Rectory the Church plate was exhibited, including an exquisite chalice with a cover of silver gilt of the time of Charles II.

STONHAM ASPALL, ST. LAMBERT. Here Mr. P. C. Hakewill, under whose direction the church was about to be restored, read a paper, of which the following is the substance. St. Lambert, who flourished at Maestricht in the 7th century, has in England only two churches dedicated to his honour, the church we are now in, and that of Burnaston in Yorkshire. He might well be contented if he had only this, if it could only now be seen in the condition it must have been in at any period between its foundation and the time of the destroyers. The font preserves to us the oldest memorial now extant, the bowl and base of which are quite early in the 13th century, the stem being interposed later, in place no doubt of the usual cluster of marble columns. There is a plain altar tomb in an archéd recess on the north side of the altar containing the upper portion of a figure in chain armour, probably the founder of the 14th century church. Mr. Hakewill was of opinion that this altar tomb and the blocked-up recess

or opening over it, might have been used as an Easter sepulchre and credence. There had been also an attached building on the north side of the chancel in place of the present modern vestry. Mr. Hakewill then referred to the graduated sedilia in three steps with its piscina in the chancel. The remains also of altars, piscina, and sedilia at the east ends of the two aisles; the misplaced fragments of very good panelling of stall fronts and bench ends both of the Decorated and Perpendicular period, and some unusual Jacobean stall seats now in the north aisle. If they could pierce the plaster ceiling above, they would see the remains of a beautiful roof, once resplendent in colour, but now too far gone he feared, to be restored to its former pattern with any certainty. In the 15th century windows of the clerestory many interesting coats of arms of the Aspal family may be deciphered. There is also a parish chest which is about the same date as the clerestory. Look into the belfry, and read and admire the liberality with which Theodore Eccleston, Esq., of Crowfield Hall, in 1742, by adding 3½ tons, made ten bells out of five, but do not look at the belfry which contains them. It is, perhaps, more ugly than anything in the county. The cornice and parapet of the clerestory is peculiarly beautiful; if they could imagine it restored with its pinnacle of no fewer than twenty-two figures of saints, of which one, if not more, have happily been found, it would be almost unique for beauty and richness.

The fine chest mentioned above measures 8ft. by 3ft., and is divided into two compartments, iron-studded, and fastened by a bar and eight locks. The register commenced 1541, and the paten bears date 1676. The Rev. W. Betham, author of the *Baronetage of England*, and the father of Sir William Betham, Ulster King of Arms, was master of the endowed school from 1784 until 1833. Mr. Betham possessed large collections illustrating the history of Suffolk; these papers were sold by auction after his death by Messrs. Sotherby and Wilkinson; one of the catalogues having the names of the purchasers is preserved in the British Museum.

MICKFIELD ST. ANDREW is a small church with little to note. A few good benches remain, and a piscina still having the wooden shelf for a credence table. The tower stands on the south side, the entrance to the church being through the base. The same arrangement exists at Stonham Aspal. The chalice, with the paten forming the cover, bears date of 1599 and the names, Robert Collington and Robert Stannard, probably the Churchwardens.

On the way to STONHAM PARVA, the next place visited, a halt was made at "the Clock House," an old residence of the Cranes, to see a fine piece of carving representing the Judgment of Solomon, which forms the mantel-piece in the keeping-room. It is of the Elizabethan period, and probably of foreign workmanship. The church, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, has a striking Perpendicular tower with good flint work. The arms of the Cranes appear on the western entrance, and the door itself is excellent work. A double hammer-beam roof has good surface carving, and is in fair preservation. The subjects on the octagon font comprise the Crucifixion, a heart pierced by arrows within a wreath, the monogram of B.V., and a second monogram apparently alluding to the Cranes.

STONHAM EARL ST. MARY.—This fine church was the great object of the day. The Rector, the Rev. J. Castley, read the following paper, which he had kindly prepared for the occasion. The church at Earl Stonham is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin. The building was begun in the latter part of the 13th century, probably about 1280, and the original edifice appears to have differed considerably from the present. Probably it had in the first instance a central tower similar to the one at Oulton, near Lowestoft, and the window which is now in the west face of the tower was placed in the west end of the nave. The clerestory windows, which formed no part of the original fabric, the present tower, and the splendid roof, were added some time in the 15th century, probably about 1460. The church once possessed a screen of carved work, which has unfortunately been removed and destroyed, but fragments of it are still in existence, sufficient to enable you to judge of its original beauty. The roof of the nave, composed of carved chesnut, is one of the most beautiful specimens of the kind existing in the county, and although it has suffered considerably, it has suffered less than other parts

INTERIOR VIEW.

SOUTH EAST ANGLE OF NAVE WALL.

EXTERIOR VIEW.

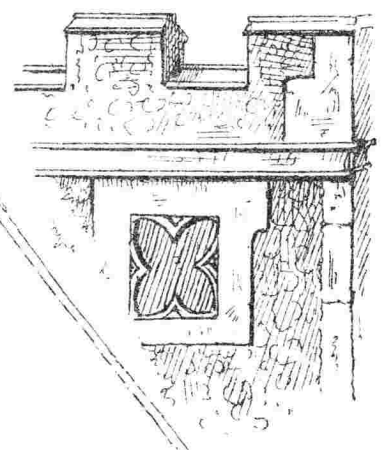
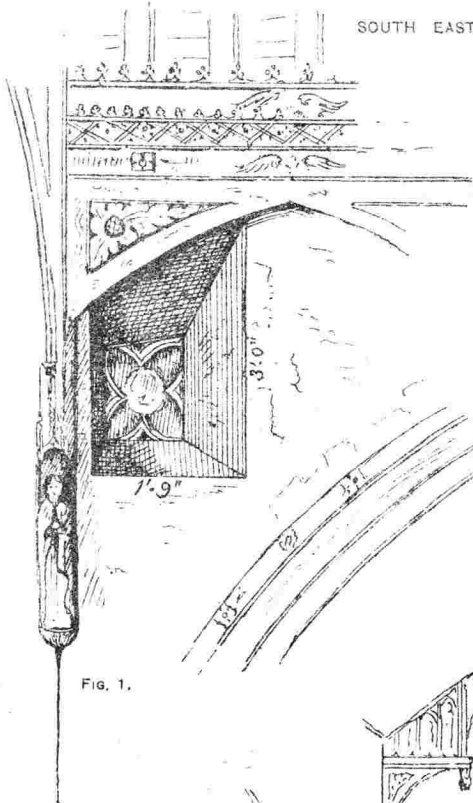


FIG. 1.

FIG. 2.

NORTH TRANSEPT.

SOUTH TRANSEPT.

FIG. 8.

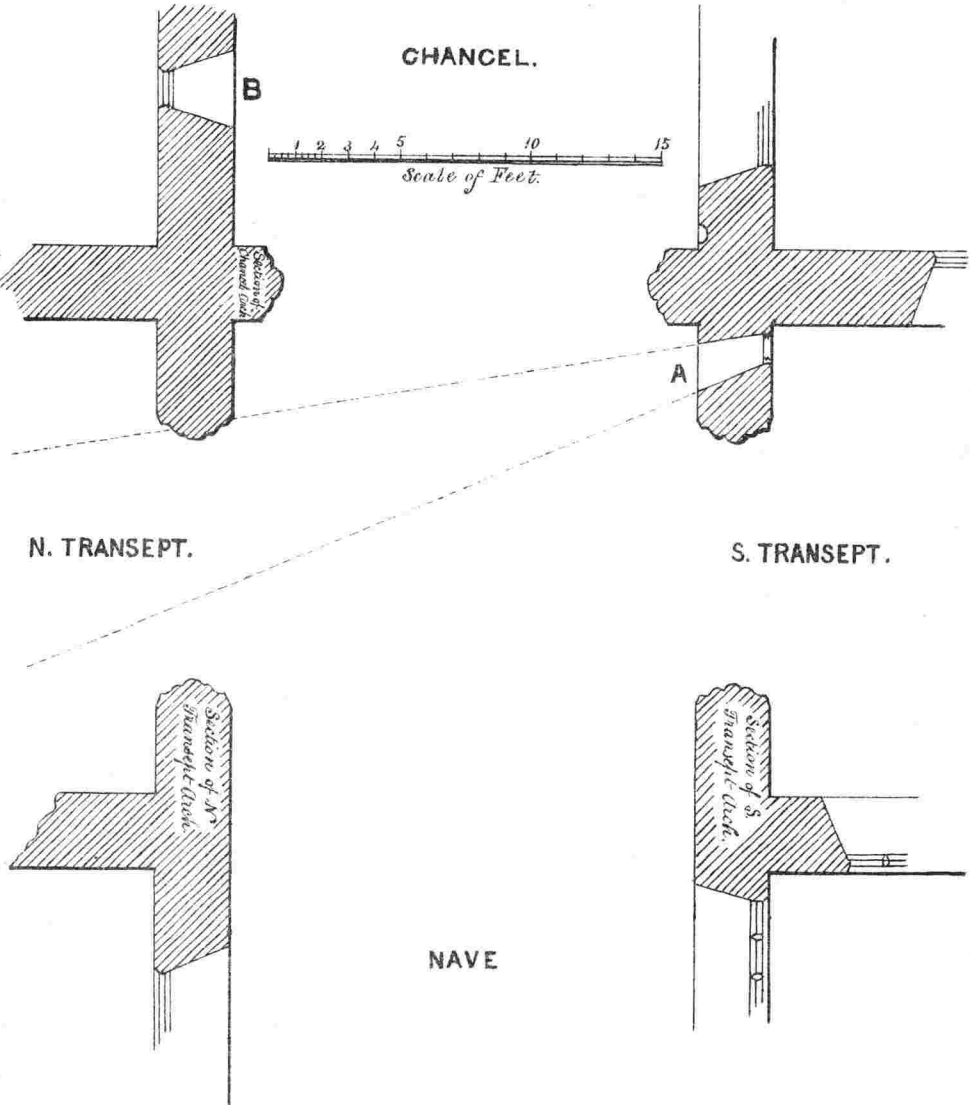
fr 20' 9"



STONHAM EARL

SHewing THE OPENING IN THE SPANDEL OF THE S. TRANSEPT ARCH.

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H Watling, del.

STONHAM EARL

PLAN SHewing THE OPENING A IN THE SPANDRIL OF THE ARCH OF THE S. TRANSEPT,
AND THE LOW SIDE WINDOW B IN THE N. WALL OF THE CHANCEL.

of the church from the despoiling hands of the Puritans. The saints upon the roof which are not mutilated, are the following: St. John, with cup and serpent beneath his feet; St. Matthias, the apostle, leaning upon his sword; St. James the Less, with fuller's club; St. Jude or Thaddeus, with a boat in his hand; St. Philip, with three loaves in his hands; St. Catherine, with a sword in her right hand, and a broken wheel at her feet; St. Walstan, with a scythe in his left hand; St. Osmond, with book of the Sarum use in his hand; St. Vitalis or Nicomedes, with club set with spikes. On the spandrels are the emblems of St. Vedast, a wolf with a goose in its mouth and one standing near; a rude human head with mouth extended and serpents issuing from it, two devils chained, &c. The roof also had 40 cherubims previous to Dowsing's visit. The font is considerably defaced. In the south transept is a tomb bearing an inscription in Norman French. The poppy heads of the stalls in the choir are exceedingly good. The pulpit, also, is a handsome one of its kind. It was placed there at a comparatively recent date in the reign of James II., and cost originally the sum of £10. In the south transept are two ancient chests, one with circular ornaments, supposed to be of Early English date. In one of them is preserved a copy of Erasmus's "Paraphrase of the New Testament." * In our parish entries there are some curious and interesting entries which would amply repay perusal to those who take pleasure in such things.

A very ancient hour-glass was here shown. It contained three glasses, one for the hour, one for half-hour, and one for quarter-of-an-hour.

In the course of repairs a puzzling opening was discovered above the transept arch. The accurate plans and drawings which illustrate this notice, kindly prepared by Mr. Watling, sufficiently show the details. We regret that we can offer no very satisfactory reason explaining the object of this opening, nor have the various authorities to whom we have shown the drawings been more satisfactory in their suggestions. Perhaps the most plausible explanation is, that it was intended to produce a kind of scenic effect by allowing the rays of the sun to fall at a certain hour of the day upon the face of the rood. Since the visit of the Society, an interesting mural painting, representing the Nativity, has been discovered on the east wall of the north transept. Tracings of these have been carefully made by Mr. H. Watling.

In the parish schoolroom Mr. Watling, with the assistance of E. Gray, Esq., had arranged a large collection of Roman relics found in the neighbourhood, upon which the Rev. J. Castley kindly read a paper, illustrated by a map of the country between Stratford (*Ad Ansam*) and Caistor (*Venta Icenorum*.) Mr. Watling, by whom the map was prepared, contends that the disputed Roman station *Sitomagus* was at Stonham, and certainly the abundant evidence of the Roman occupation of that place may be cited in support of his views. Round the room were tables and forms covered with fragments of Roman pottery, bronze and bone pins, &c., fibulæ, tiles, querns, &c., silver and copper coins from Augustus to Valens, and also a curious knife with a bone handle, found at Baylham with coins; knives with bone handles were commonly used by Romans of the middle classes. Juvenal alludes to this in the following passage, quoted by Mr. Roach Smith :

Adeo nulla uncia nobis
Est eboris, nec tessellæ, nec calculus ex hac
Materia: quin ipsa manubria cultorum
Ossea.

Bones of the *Bos Longipons* and the red deer were exhibited in large numbers; many of the deer bones had been utilised, and one core of deer horn had been pierced by a well-drilled hole.

CREETING ST. PETER. This parish was consolidated in 1711 with Creeting All Saints and Creeting St. Olave's, and was the last of these seats of the ancient family of the Gratings visited. The church possesses a good pulpit upon a single stem, and a font in good condition, of the type previously mentioned. On one face is a flower

* In Tavistock Church Erasmus's Paraphrase was secured by a chain so late as 1830. The original cost was 15s. *Gent. Mag.*, 1830, p. 410.

surrounded by a wreath, on another a square ornament interlaced. In the north and south walls are low side windows with cusped heads. Parker's *Suffolk Churches* alludes to a fresco upon the north wall; this no longer exists. The register dates from 1558. The paten bears date 1779, and was the gift of John Freeman. On the chalice is a shield showing upon a bend three stags heads; the shield is surmounted by a crest, a helmet bearing a dog.

Time permitted only a hurried visit to the church of STOWMARKET, then under repair. A short pause at the tomb of Dr. Young, and then a rapid retreat to the Fox Inn, where the dinner-bell had already sounded. Before separating, the President proposed a vote of thanks to the Rev. W. H. Sewell, to Mr. Hakewill, and the Rev. J. Castley, for the papers they had prepared and read. Thanks were also unanimously given to Mr. H. Watling and Mr. Gray, for all the trouble they had taken in arranging the Museum; the Hon. Secretary asking permission to express his personal thanks to Mr. Watling for the valuable assistance he had given in arranging the general programme.