

CORALLINE CRAG

by VIC HARRUP

THE ARTICLE in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, Volume XL, Part 4 (2004), by John F. Potter on the subject of the use of coralline crag in churches and other buildings, included speculation that the towers of Chillesford and Wantisden churches were built around the middle of the fourteenth century. Two wills, written a century later, reveal that work on the latter tower was taking place between 1445 and 1451. Alexander Blok instructed his executors to pay, out of his goods, enough money for two yards in height of the new tower, and John Thorn left seventeen shillings to be paid out at three separate work-stages. Comparing the two towers, the one at Wantisden comprises pieces of stone sawn in fairly regular blocks, whereas the Chillesford tower has irregular stonework often tapering at one end. The former is of a higher standard of masonry, but whether earlier or later is unknown. Hardly any wills exist for Chillesford before the Reformation, and there seems to be no other evidence.

A later use of coralline crag occurs in Sir Michael Stanhope's bailiff's accounts for Sudbourne in the year 1606. At this time stables at his house named Chapman's were being built, using crag from Sudbourne, bricks from Chillesford, with the carpentry being supplied by Richard Brady of Butley. Thomas Hughes, the bailiff, also recorded that over 50 loads of stone were gathered within and about Orford Castle '*for the ramming of the foundations of the new stable*', probably for the stable floor. The gatherers were paid two pence a load, whereas the carriage to Chapmans cost eight pence. Reference to foundations '*from the cow house to the brewhouse*', also made from gathered stone, appears later. The earlier entries, for digging crag were '*for the building of the new stable*', and presumably not just for foundations.

The bailiff was from Flintshire in north Wales, and his unfamiliarity of some local speech is revealed by his first entry under the heading of the new stable. He wrote 'Makinge of an awtar as they terme it', and recorded five shillings paid to John Wincke for clearing his pit. Another 'awtar' was made by two other men at Wincke's pit, for which they were paid twenty pence. These entries suggest that the digging of crag from this pit was intermittent, therefore requiring some clearance of grass and plant growth. Norden shows the pit by a series of dots, and it lay within Wincke's copyhold of about ten acres. In the schedule, part of his survey of 1601, Norden wrote, 'In this is a quarrie of stone'. The pit can be seen near Crag Farmhouse to the east of Sudbourne Church.

Wincke described himself as a wheelwright in his will. He worked no more for Sir Michael and died in 1606 at Sudbourne, leaving his house in Orford to his wife. Samuel Palgrave earned ten pence a day for 25 days digging, and William Barnes and others carried nearly 200 loads to Chapman's, earning ten pence a load. Other costs included bricks from Sir Michael's kiln at Chillesford and work carried out by Crossman the mason and carpentry by Brady.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The 15th century wills, cited below, were translated from the Latin by Peter Northeast.

REFERENCES

- Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich): Manor of Sudbourne rental 1606, ref. V5/18/10.1.
 John Norden's Survey of the Estates of Sir Michael Stanhope, ref. V5/22/1 and EE5/11/1.
 Wills: Alexander Blok ref. IC/AA2/1/13, John Thorn IC/AA2/1/89, John Wincke IC/AA2/41/140 and Thomas Hughes IC/AA2/45/20.