

## NOTES.

During the cleaning of the walls of Gislingham Church last September (1928), various traces of inscriptions were found under at least four coats of colourwash and other matter.

(1). Over the South door a table of the Commandments with fragments of a border, "his oxen nor his affe nor anything."

(2). In the recess between the South door and the Chancel arch powdery fragments of other letters.

(3). To the right of the Chancel arch a table of Commandments with a double border, the only letters decipherable being, "God" at the top and "bear falfe . . . . . eighb . . ." the bottom border being level with the top mark where the rood screen once was fixed in the masonry of the arch.

(4). Between the pulpit and the botanie window where the armorial bearings of a former rector stand out—"struction . . . the man that heareth . . . findeth"—"PROVERBES"—"LORD?" shows the text to have included Prov. VIII, 33—35 and probably vv. 32 and 36. The armorial bearings had apparently been superimposed later.

There were fragments of letters in block type "d" over a large area above the north door but they were only powdery remains, impossible to recover owing to a coating of limewash which had rendered everything brittle. There are stick dials, initials and merchants' marks cut in the Chancel arch. Two double circles by the south door appear to indicate where the consecration marks stood and there were traces of a black ornamental dado on the walls, but no traces of pictures.

T.A.P.

## DEBENHAM CHURCH.

In the Domesday Survey, 1086, mention is made of the existence of two churches within the town of Debenham, St. Mary's and St. Andrew's. It is difficult to state what was the site of the latter church, it may have been that of the chapel of Ulveston Hall; or, what is more probable, the church may have been that of St. Andrew's, Boyton, in the Wilford Hundred, for the 30 acres of demesne land mentioned as belonging to Debenham, but stated as lying in another hundred, were granted together with the church of St. Andrew's, Boyton, to the Priory and Convent of Butley, in the year 1356. This grant of 30 acres, held at the time by Matilda, wife of Stephen Gerald, was the foundation of Abbots Hall, Debenham. The addition of the Rectory of Debenham and of

further grants of lands made the possessions of the Priory, or as it is called, Abbey of Butley, so extensive as to create in later days the erroneous tradition that an Abbey was erected within the parish.

In a charter dated 1352, containing the composition between the Abbey of Ely and the Abbey of Butley, as appropriators of Debenham Church, concerning the rights to tithes, there is no mention of a church of St. Andrew's, although full mention is made of many meadows, ditches, boundaries and persons.

The church of St. Mary remained in the hands of Butley Abbey until the Reformation, when the Rectory was granted to Francis Framlingham, 1543.

Records throw very little light upon history of the Church. From the pre-Reformation Wills we are able to glean a few notes, and the building itself will furnish us with the rest.

In 1450 the brethren and sisters of the Gild of the Holy Trinity worshipped within the walls and held their annual feast within their Gild Hall. The Gild of St. Mary was purely a devotional or religious gild, and met for worship within Our Lady's Chapel, the wall of which was adorned by the image of St. Peter, painted at the expense of Thomas Sherman in 1510.

In 1465 the vestry was in a state of decay, and a movement was set on foot to rebuild it. The undertaking was evidently begun but not completed in 1476, for Robert Cheke, lord of the manor of Blodhall, bequeathed the sum of 53s. 4d. for the welfare of the soul of John Burghard if the vestry were finished within the space of 3 years. What was this vestry? Was it the room within the tower known as "The Priest's Chamber"? Or was it the room known as the Chapel of Our Lady, occupying a position somewhat similar to the Gild Chapel of Our Lady, Mildenhall.

Trinity Sunday was the great festival in Suffolk villages, hence the number of gilds of the Holy Trinity, and the many altars dedicated thereto. Godfrey Lawter by his will, dated 4 August 1474, bequeathed a bushel of malt to the Altar of the Holy Trinity within Debenham Church. The emblem of the Holy Trinity is to be seen in some form or other upon most Suffolk churches, frequently upon the panels of the font.

Bequests to the ornaments and fabric of the church were numerous, in 1450 Margery Palgrave gave to the church a chalice of the value of 40s., and in 1476 William Baldewyn unable to bestow a bell upon the Church, supplied the clapper to the Great Bell. The bells of Debenham Church are especially noted.

A few words as to the building itself. I have already alluded to the Priest's Chamber, I would now point out the head of a piscina. It appears to me to represent that of an Archbishop, probably of St. Thomas a Beckett, introducer of the Festival of the Holy Trinity, and a Saint held in the highest veneration throughout Suffolk. This piscina may mark the spot where the Altar of the Holy Trinity stood. The altar tomb was erected to the memory of the royalist Chas. Gawdy and Vere (spelt Veare) his wife, in 1650. From a comparison of the ornamentation upon the tomb and upon the various walls and panels of Crows Hall we may conclude that the Hall was restored and the tomb erected in the same period, 1630.

It has been pointed out to me that the chancel level is lower than that of the nave; this follows the earliest construction of churches. I think the same construction is to be seen in Fritton Church. The outer structure of the West porch is very interesting, especially the lower part of the wall, the corner stones and the niches. Notice should be taken of the Jacobean pulpit; of the font with its symbols of the Evangelists; of the quaint epitaph and arms designed by John Sheppard of Wetheringsett, and of the bell-boards recording the assiduous labours of Debenham bell-ringers.

V.B.R.

## FINDS.

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FORNHAM. During draining excavations at Fornham Priory (formerly Babwell Priory) a stone coffin was discovered some two feet below the surface.

It is without a lid and about 18 inches in depth and was commendably left in position by the owner of the property and reburied. R.I.P.

STRATFORD ST. MARY. An Amphora of exceptional size was turned up by the plough at Stratford St. Mary.

It is 3-ft. 7-in. in length and 2-ft. 8-in. in circumference at the widest part.

It was probably dropped from a boat during the Roman occupation era. The small Bay in which it was found having been since drained and cultivated.

H.A.H.