

## THE WEATHER VANES OF SUFFOLK.

## PART I.

By CLAUDE J. W. MESSENT, A.R.I.B.A.

(Author of "The Weather Vanes of Norfolk and Norwich," etc.).

It is quite possible that early man sought to ascertain the direction of the wind by holding up a skin or cloth tied to a stick, or he may have resorted to the wet forefinger, which his boy scout descendants still employ to-day. The former instrument would be a kind of flag, and the origin of the term "Vane" can be found by going back to Saxon, and early Norman history. Similar words in Anglo-Saxon, Dutch and German mean "Flag," an object which, when it is placed on the top of a building, staff or pole, would serve the same purpose as the simplest form of weather vane, namely, to indicate the direction of the wind.

There is documentary evidence of the existence of weather vanes in Saxon and Norman times, as they can be found illustrated on manuscripts and tapestries of those periods, when they were always depicted on cathedrals and churches, but never on secular buildings. They were generally shewn as a representation of an arrow, which is the equivalent of a feather, or of a cock, which is the equivalent of many feathers, the latter also has a religious significance in standing for watchfulness, and as the warning to St. Peter.

In spite of the early origin of weather vanes, scarcely an example exists more than a hundred years old, this however, will be more readily understood when it is pointed out in what an exposed position all vanes are placed, and the difficulty of getting to oil, paint and keep them in perfect order so that corrosion may not take place.

The general principle of a vane consists of a spindle placed in a socket, the former carrying the pointer and the latter being the base fixed to the building. In the more modern types two plates are often found on top of one another, one on the spindle, the other on the socket, the underside of the top plate and the top side of the under plate are both kept greased in order that the pointer may easily revolve with the slightest change in the direction of the wind. The pointer is weighted more heavily at the rear than at the front in order to make it work with the wind. The "flag" type of vane is worked on the same principle as a flag and the actual junction of the pointer with the base consists of a cylinder revolving on a spindle.

It is not until after the 15th century that any deviation from the "arrow" and "cock" types of vanes occurs and then only the "flag" type is to be found in addition to the original two types. Stencilled copper appears to be the most favoured material for this type of vane, but in modern examples stencilled sheet iron is often found.

Coming to the 18th century, we find all sorts of designs appearing and curiously enough during the following century, when many of the

branches of art allied to architecture were at rather a low ebb, weather-vanes appear to have maintained quite a high level in design as can be seen by many examples existing at the present day. Further, the 20th century has produced many beautiful designs in weather vanes and Suffolk is particularly fortunate in possessing at least two very good firms of blacksmiths, who have turned out many exquisite designs in high class workmanship, and no apology is necessary for including them with the older ones in an archæological publication.

The variety of designs in weather vanes since the commencement of the 18th century, as pointed out above, is extremely large, even in some of the commonest types, such as the "cock" type and the "arrow" type; the designs can vary considerably, and the vertical stem and the horizontal arms and even the actual pointer are ornamented with scrolls and numerous other devices, some having the fleur-de-lis, or vine leaves incorporated in their designs.

A number of examples on churches and other buildings are without the four chief points of the compass being indicated. In the case of churches the difficulty is overcome by the fact that those buildings are orientated, but on the secular ones which are not orientated it is necessary for the sun to be shining and the time of day known in order that a stranger may be able to ascertain from what quarter the wind is blowing.

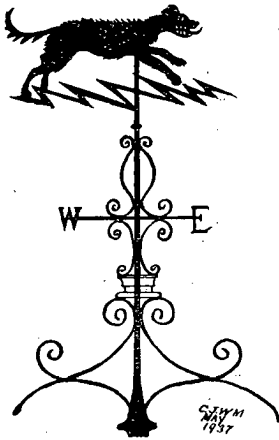
Besides the "arrow" type and the symbolical "cock" type, the subjects covered in the design of vanes include heraldic, inn and various trade signs, other religious symbols, many phases of sport, many types of ships, much beautiful stencilling, and many magnificent designs in wrought iron work. Some designs have touches of humour, while others depict work or sport. Numerous kinds of lettering are to be found in representations of the four principal points of the compass.

In Suffolk, unfortunately, no example previous to the 18th century exists, Norfolk, however, is a little more fortunate in possessing three dating back earlier; these include a very crude 15th century type of cock, now mounted on modern iron work on the tower of Emneth Church in the extreme south-west of the county. The next in date is the very beautiful one stencilled in copper-gilt on one of the turrets of Oxborough Hall, c. 1661. The remaining one is another example of stencilled copper bearing the date 1680 and the initials of various town bailiffs and burgesses, on Fuller's Town Tower at Great Yarmouth.

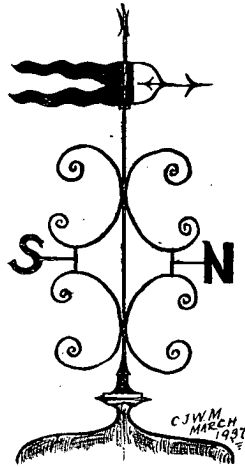
In the county under consideration the best examples are more or less equally distributed over the present and the two previous centuries and as many out-of-the-way examples are gradually being brought to light it is considered best to take the various examples at random.

No. 1. On the Lamp Standard, in the Market Place, at BUNGAY.

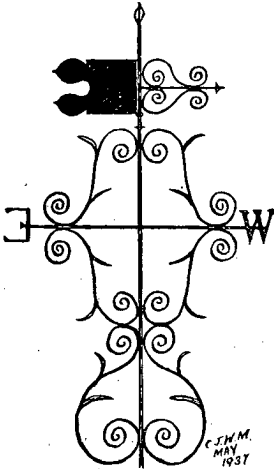
This example has a pointer which represents a mad dog running on a streak of forked lightning, there is some good ornamental wrought iron work beneath. The idea of the mad dog is taken from an incident



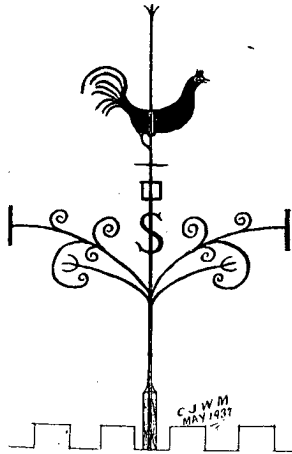
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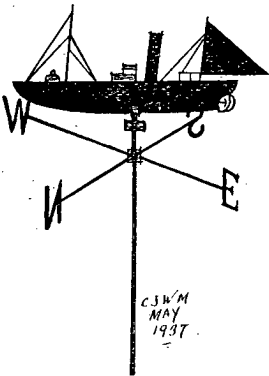
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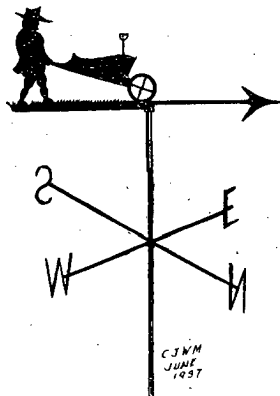
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which is reported to have happened one Sunday morning many years ago in St. Mary's Church, when the worst thunderstorm ever known raged over the town, the church was struck, and a large black dog was seen to race madly up and down the church, attacking many people. This dreadful incident has never been forgotten, and a few years ago this weather vane was erected by the then Town Reeve. It was made by Messrs. H. N. Rumsby and Sons, of Earsham Street, Bungay, from a design by Mr. Hugh De Poix, of Broome, a Norfolk village close by.

No. 2. On the Tower to the Town Hall at EYE.

This example has two rather unusual features; the head of the pointer has two arrow heads, one pointing the usual way, the other pointing in the reverse direction. The other unusual feature is that the four letters of the compass are not supported on the usual horizontal supports running through the central vertical stem, but are supported on the double spiral scrolls of the wrought iron ornamentation. The letters are of the heavy block type. The present Town Hall was erected on the site of an earlier building. It was opened on the 12th May, 1857, and the weather vane dates from that time, being a product of Victorian craftsmanship.

No. 3. On the roof of a private house on the east side of Northgate at BECCLES.

This example is an excellent specimen of ornamental wrought iron work. It was made by the village blacksmith at Gillingham, just over the county border in Norfolk, where another vane can be seen on the smithy's premises, which is a kind of trade sign, as it depicts a man in the act of shoeing a horse. These vanes show what a high standard of workmanship can be produced in a country village.

No. 4. On the Church of All Saints at STRADBROKE.

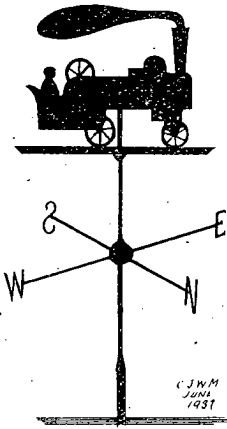
This example is a variation of the well-known "cock" type of pointer. The ornamental wrought iron work beneath is a most unusual design, and it will be noted from the illustration that the letters of the four points of the compass are at right angles to the ornamentation. This is a very uncommon arrangement, as in only three examples out of a hundred and twelve in Norfolk are the letters so placed, and up to the present only one other example has been found in Suffolk, this will be described later.

No. 5. On the top of the Consolidated Fisheries Building at the corner of Battery Green Road at LOWESTOFT.

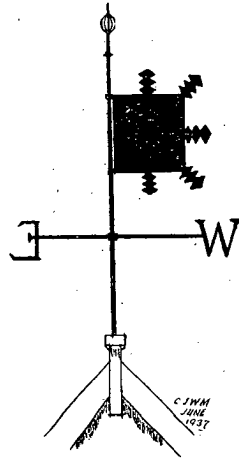
This example has a pointer which represents a fishing trawler. It is a most appropriate subject for a weather vane in a seaport and fishing town.

No. 6. On the roof of the Canteen at High Lodge Labour Camp at SANTON DOWNHAM, near Brandon.

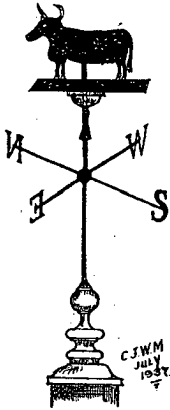
This example has a pointer consisting of an arrow, on the tail piece of which is a representation of a gardener with a wheel barrow with a



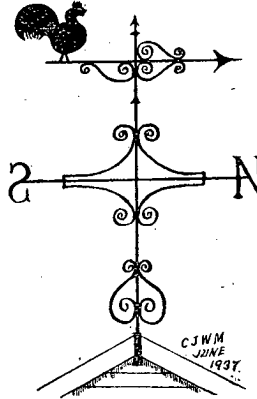
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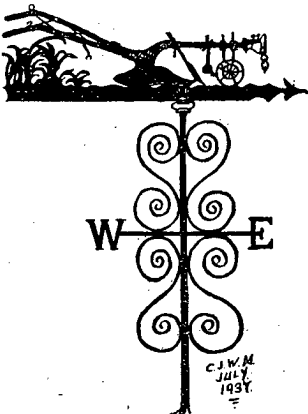
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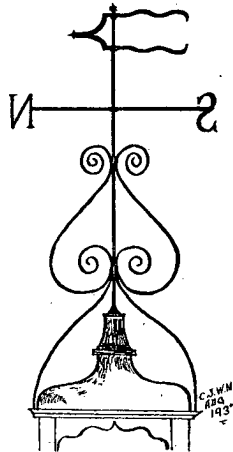
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No. 12

spade in it. This is a most appropriate subject for a vane on a labour camp building. It is quite a modern example made only a few years ago.

No. 7. On the Engineering Works at STANTON, near Thetford.

This example has a pointer in the form of a traction engine, showing a man driving it with smoke coming out of the chimney. It is a trade sign as traction engines are repaired at these Engineering Works.

No. 8. On the roof of the Parish Institute at DEBENHAM, near Eye.

This example is of the flag type of vane. It is a most curious design and quite different to any other in the county. It is said to be over a hundred years old and the neat Georgian letters to the four points of the compass are typical of work done about 1820, or even earlier. The actual building appears to be considerably older.

No. 9. On a butcher's premises at DEBENHAM, near Eye.

This example has the representation of a bullock on the pointer. It is a most suitable subject for a weather vane on a butcher's premises, and acts as a kind of trade sign.

No. 10. On the Mill at BARNINGHAM, near Thetford.

This example is a curious combination of the "cock" and "arrow" types of vane, the latter type being the main principle of the vane, the arrow being supported by three pieces of double scroll ornament and the tail balanced by the representation of the cockerel. The rest of the vane shows quite an original treatment of ornamental wrought iron work.

No. 11. On Messrs. H. N. Rumsby and Sons' Premises at Earsham Street, BUNGAY.

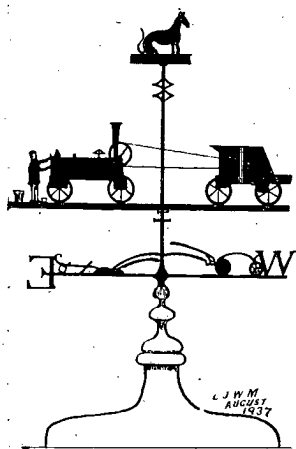
This example is one of the finest weather vanes in East Anglia. The pointer represents a plough of the type manufactured by Messrs. H. N. Rumsby and Sons, and acts as a trade sign. It was designed by Mr. Hugh De Poix, of Broome Lodge, and made by Mr. H. N. Rumsby. The detail of the pointer is remarkably well executed, and the ornamental scroll work beneath completes the design.

No. 12. On the Church of St. Peter at BRAMPTON, near Beccles.

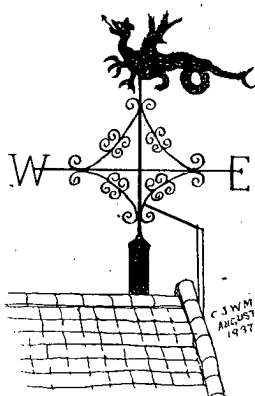
This example is fixed to the bell turret on the top of the tower. The general design is rather plain, but the pointer is very unusual, being of the skeleton type.

No. 13. On Messrs. Garrett and Sons, Ltd., Premises at LEISTON.

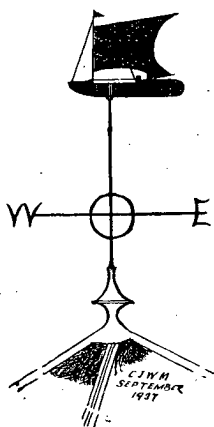
This example is one of the most remarkable weather vanes in East Anglia, if not in the whole country. It has a kind of double pointer, the top part consisting of a dog, which is taken from the Garrett coat-of-arms. The main part of the pointer beneath consists of a portable engine, with a man and bucket and a small box, and the head of the pointer has a representation of a threshing machine, which is connected to the portable engine by two straps from the flywheel. The arms of



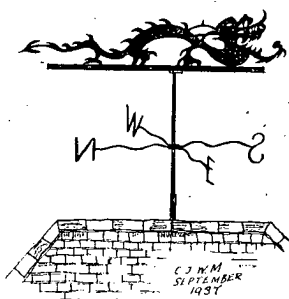
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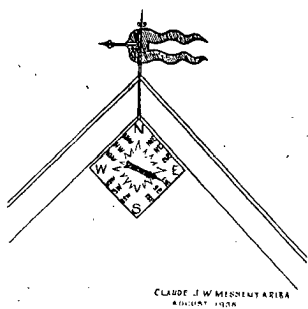
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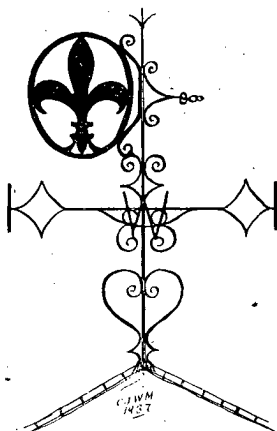
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No. 18

the four points of the compass beneath have representations of ploughs and horse-hoes alternating. All these objects, except the dog at the top, show implements made, or which used to be made in the engineering works of Messrs. Garrett and Sons, Ltd. This vane is indeed a trade sign. It is said to be about a hundred years old.

No. 14. On an outbuilding at the rear of Stone House at BRAMFIELD, near Halesworth.

This example has a pointer representing a dragon, the design of which is extremely good. The wrought iron work beneath is rather unusual, but quite effective. This vane was made and erected in 1837.

No. 15. On the Wherry Hotel at OULTON BROAD, near Lowestoft.

This example has a pointer which represents a Norfolk Wherry in full sail, and is a most appropriate subject for a vane in the Broads district. It acts as an inn sign. It is of fairly modern workmanship. The four points of the compass have unusual curved letters.

No. 16. On the roof of the Summer House in Dr. Cane's garden at Trinity Street, BUNGAY.

This is quite a modern example and has the representation of a Chinese dragon for the pointer. It was made only a few years ago by Dr. Cane's son, when at school. It is painted a bright red which helps to give it a very realistic appearance.

No. 17. On premises to a country house at HEPWORTH, near Bury St. Edmunds.

This example is unique in the whole country, consisting as it does of not only a pointer, but of a dial and hand which is worked from the revolving spindle of the pointer. It is about a hundred years old.

No. 18. On the roof of a large country house called "Bevills" at BURES, near Sudbury.

This example is a very beautiful design in wrought iron work, the tail of the pointer having the fleur-de-lis in an oval. This is the only vane in Suffolk, besides the one on Stradbroke Church, which has the letters to the four points of the compass at right angles to the ornamentation.