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Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

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Chancel separated from the Nave by the Chancel arch. Cole remarks upon the fact that there was neither painted glass or monuments in the Church, it being no place for sepulture. The handsome Norman stone Font placed in the centre of the Church at the west end, if of rather late date and somewhat small, has a wide opening. It has a circular bowl with large escallops. An illustration appears in *Archæologia*, Vol. xvi. The present character of the building is completely altered from its former appearance. The west wall has a single-light D. window over which is the double opening in the gable, originally intended for the bells; this has been turned into a two-light lancet window to give light to a former gallery. In concluding his remarks, Mr. Evelyn White referred to various matters of detail, comparing the Church as it probably existed at different periods with its present position and character. It would, he said, be neither safe or politic to seek to 'restore' the Church back again to what it once was, but he sincerely trusted that a projected renovation, which he understood to be imminent, might result in an achievement that would commend itself to those who shared with him a desire to see Stuntney Church fashioned upon the model of the best type of a village Church, and one that would moreover possess some ennobling traces of its association with the past, and with the mother Church of Ely.

The Rev. Kenelm Smith fully agreed with all that had fallen from their Secretary, to whom they were indebted for bringing the matter forward. He had known the Church of Stuntney since he was four years old, and the vandalism from which it had suffered was simply appalling. Other members similarly expressed strong disapprobation of what had been done at Stuntney.

A vote of thanks to the chairman having been tendered, Mr. Pell said he should be pleased to do all in his power to further the interests of the Society.

Shortly after the meeting, Mr. F. T. Mullett, Architect and Surveyor, of Downing House, Cambridge, as a member of the Society, forwarded at the Secretary's invitation, the following paper dealing with STUNTNEY CHURCH, to which building he had devoted much attention in connection with drawing plans, &c., for its proposed restoration.

"It may be well, as far as possible, to make a record of what Stuntney Church once was, and what it now is. In the collections of the Rev. T. Kerrich, (*Brit. Mus. Add. MSS.*, No. 6752, f. 222, A.D. 1797), is a plan of the Church as then existant, with figured dimensions, shewing that it consisted of two parallelograms, a Chancel about 15 feet 3 inches long from east to west, and a Nave about 30 feet long and 17 feet 6 inches wide. I purposely make these figures approximate, as although the plans shews dimensions measured to half inches (and even $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch), yet an examination of the figures proves that they were taken somewhat in haste, and no attempt made to prove their correctness. They are how-

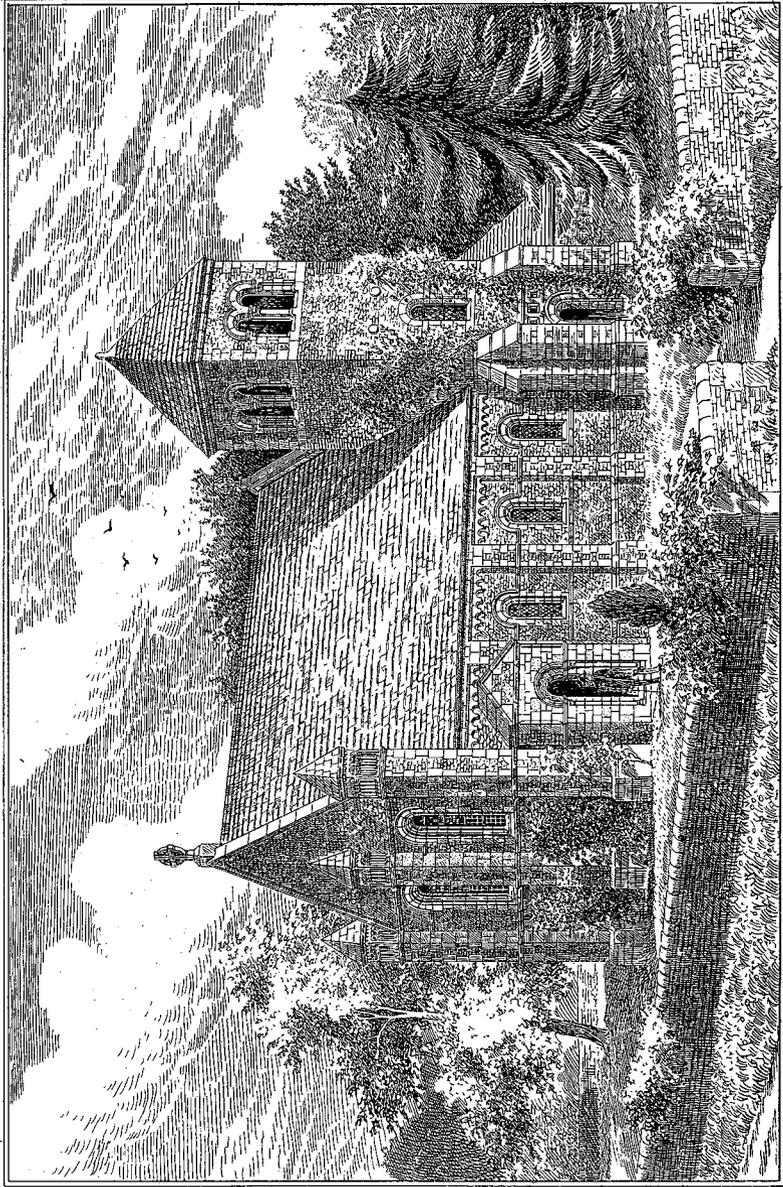
ever sufficiently correct, to shew that the north, east and west walls of the eastern and narrow end of the present Chancel occupy the same site as the old ones, and that the western and broader portion of the present Chancel is the eastern end of the old Nave. The plan does not shew any windows to the Chancel, no east end buttresses, or north and south buttresses in the extension of the western wall of the Nave, but does exhibit western buttresses in extension of the north and south walls of the Nave. These points however only confirm as a fact the hurried manner of the measuring, as Cole's MS; (*Brit. Mus. Add. MSS.*, 5821, page 26), [October 14th 1748], contains a small rough perspective sketch of the Church from the N.E.; which shews the missing windows and buttresses, but does not shew the western buttresses of the Nave. The particulars both of Cole and Kerrich must in consequence be combined to ascertain with any degree of exactitude the position, size, and details of the old Church, and to assist in determining its history. Fortunately both documents contain particulars and measurements of the details of special features of the structure which then existed, and which on examination prove that the same features are still to be found in the present Church. These consist of the great (Chancel) arch, the north and south doorways, and the Font, to which may probably be added the gable Cross. These remains are the only existing constructional records of the date of the original Church, and I think there could never have been any others which possessed anything of architectural design, and these are all of late Norman style. Probably the archives of Holy Trinity Parish in Ely, and also those of the Cathedral, would supply earlier and accurate information as to this building. In my opinion the original Church was the same building as shewn in Cole's sketch and Kerrich's plan; the present Chancel walls are portions of it, and were erected in the latter part of the 11th or the early part of the 12th century. Cole has a memorandum "Query; if dedicated to the Honour of the Holy Cross, as per Bull of Pope Nicholas 3rd, 1279; being there mentioned." This at once implies a foundation anterior to that date. Several characteristic features point to the probability of the place having been a halting ground and scene of preparation for pilgrims more than a village Church. The absence of all buildings except the bare Nave and Chancel, the site at the terminus of the great east road through the eastern counties from the seaports, its commanding position on the brow of the hill, close to ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant) and overlooking the Cathedral City from which it was separated by the river and a wide expanse of Fen, lends aid to this view; while the modern institution of the graveyard, and its recorded dependence upon Trinity Church, are against its independent existence, as also is the entire absence of memorials to Stuntney inhabitants of any degree. Cole notes that in the middle of the 18th century there was "neither painted glass or monuments in or about the Chapel, it being not used for sepulture; only a Chapel of Ease to Trinity Church in Ely."

The existing old work and the records referred to, shew the original Chapel to have been a plain unpretending structure of rubble stone walls with very shallow foundations, the builders having evidently studied the nature of the site and foreseen the inutility of digging deep into the gault with its treacherous nature. The west and east walls of the Nave and the east wall of the Chancel is finished with gables, the Norman gable cross over the present Chancel arch being probably the original one refixed, it may however be a replica of a prior one of clunch as the external masonry with any work in it, seems to have been all clunch. Apparently there were no gable parapets, the tiled roofs overrunning the walls with a right angle pitch. Was the original roof tiled or thatched? it was tiled in 1748. The Chancel probably had north, south, and east windows, but no vestige of them remains. At a later period the Chancel seems to have fallen into bad condition, and new single light windows were inserted in the north and south walls and a three light window in the east end, buttresses being built at the corners. All these appear to have been of Perpendicular design. As already mentioned Kerrich does not shew these windows or buttresses (Cole, a few years earlier does), he seems to have ignored them in favour of the earlier work of which he gives pretty full particulars. Probably at the same time the west end buttresses were built, and inferentially the whole structure must at this time have been materially dilapidated and received a general reparation. The nave possessed north and south doorways opposite each other at two thirds of its length from the Chancel arch, with north and south windows also opposite each other at about the middle of that length of wall. Both windows were swept away when the present Nave was built, but the external masonry of the doorways still remains. Kerrich makes a special note that the north window is "the only original window remaining," and gives a figured sketch of it, shewing square outer jambs which held the glazing, 5 inches wide sight size, and less than 3 feet high, with a semicircular head: inside a set back of 6 inches on each side with deep splays opening to 4 feet on the inner face of the wall, and a corresponding splay to the sill. It was 4 feet wide across the jaws of the splays, 4 feet high to the springing, and 4 feet from the floor to the arris of the sill, the jamb splays being continued around the circular head. No doubt the south window corresponded exactly, and the Chancel window (or windows) were the same structurally and possibly in size. Speculating from this I am inclined to think that the east wall of the Chancel had three such small narrow windows, as may be seen to this day in Addington Church, Surrey. Kerrich's south window was 2 feet 4 inches wide between the jambs, splayed inside to 3 feet 4 inches wide, with a broad flat hollow sunk in each splay carried around the arch and stopped on a shallow splayed sill, the height being about 4 feet 8 inches on the inner face of the wall from the arris of the sill to the apex of the arch, which was flat pointed. The north doorway was of clunch, of late Norman design, as was

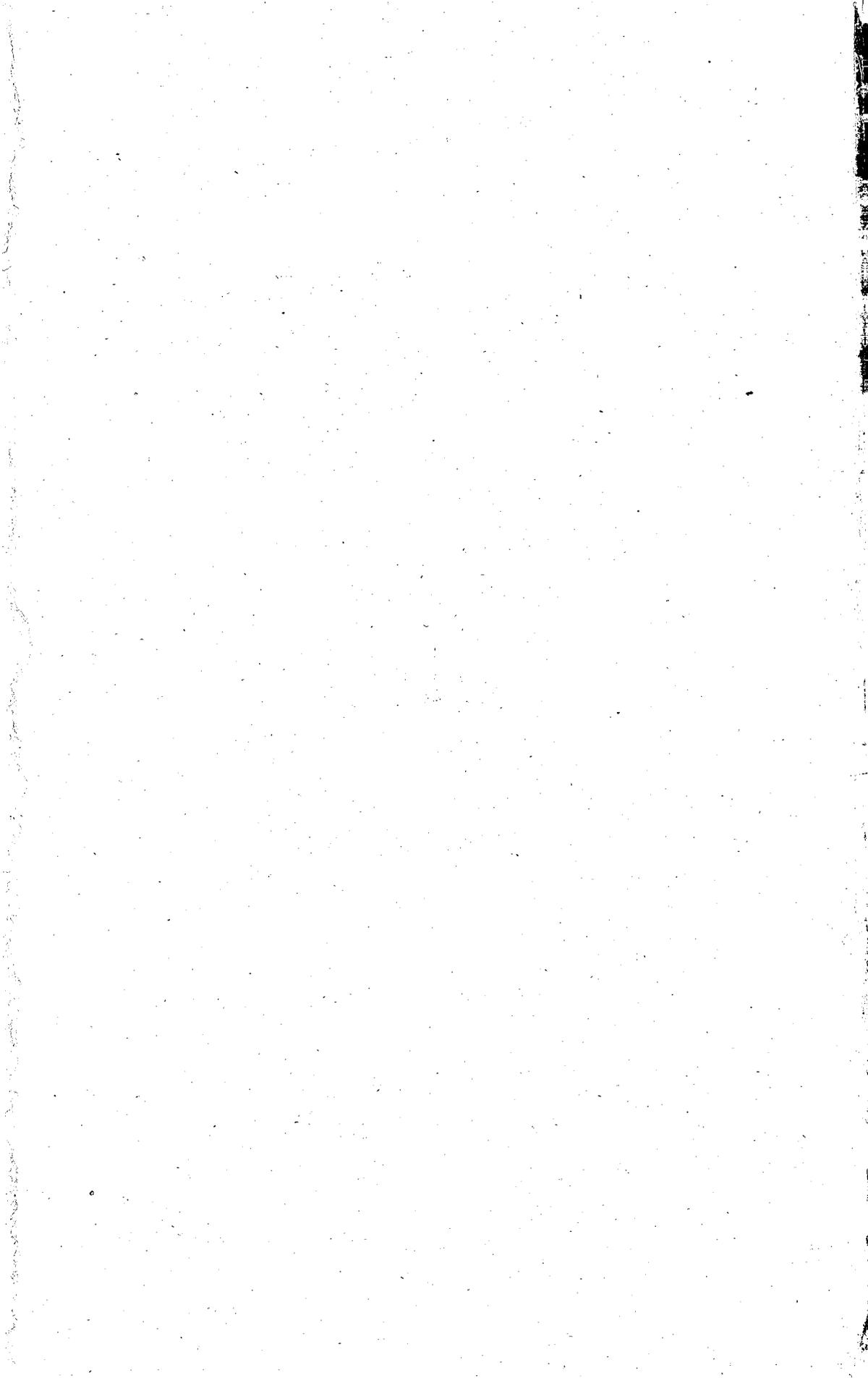
also the great arch. Both are in good preservation and were re-erected when the present Nave was built, the great arch now forming the front of the organ chamber opening to the chancel, and the doorway being built into the east wall, as a recess, at the south end. The south doorway exactly corresponds but is of stone, and is reused as the present doorway. It is possible that it was originally clunch, which perished under the influence of weather and was copied in stone. These three archways agree in date and style, but vary in every detail, though not in facial appearance, having roll billet mouldings, moulded chevrons, and a roll under, foliated caps to the recessed column shafts, and moulded bases. Both Cole and Kerrich give sketches of nearly every detail, but the latter also shews the inner masonry of both doors to have had stone lintels with flat segment soffits, resting on moulded corbel springers which were the top stones of a plain inner jamb. This implies that at some anterior date new doors had been made, and probably they were hung with wrought iron hooks and band hinges in a check work in the new masonry, with or without frames. In process of time it would seem, an urgent general reparation was rendered necessary, buttresses were built to sustain the dilapidated walls, decayed windows were cut out and new ones substituted, and more light being required, the openings were made wider and higher, and it maybe fresh windows were pierced in the Chancel walls. According to the time the characteristics of these features would be Perpendicular, and the building would attain the appearance shewn in Cole's sketch and Kerrich's plan. The Vestry was doubtless erected about this time, and the "two small bells hung in the wall at the west end" as mentioned by Cole, with the rough wooden bell cot shewn in a small print of a subsequent date. Some time after the visits of Cole and Kerrich it appears that the tiles were stripped from the roofs, which were covered with thatch instead. It may easily be inferred from this that the walls were giving way and the object was to lighten the load. Owing probably to the possession of sufficient funds in 1856, this unfortunate Church suffered an alteration from which it can never recover, as it has obliterated a large portion of the older work, and destroyed the simple appearance of the village Church, by the construction of the broad flint faced Nave and the hideous Tower now in existence. At this date a fashion had obtained of constructing new Churches with broad Naves and cross-braced roofs, two principles which have since proved totally incompatible with each other, as the entire weight of the roof is concentrated upon the legs and feet of the rafters and transferred to the top of the walls with the multiplication of everage as a direct outward thrust, tending to overturn them. With the folly of ambition, this fashion was applied to Stuntney Church, and a new Nave was built as wide as the old one was long, and nearly as long as the original Nave and Chancel combined. Thus a very small parish has been saddled for nearly half a century with the maintenance of a comparatively large structure which was designed with all the

seeds of immediate decay inherent in it. In the course of this alteration five-eighths of the length of the old Nave from the west end was destroyed, and the remainder left up to increase the length of the old Chancel. In this position a new east wall and Chancel arch of stone was erected, having the opening equal in span to the width of the old Nave, with a height in proportion. Some attempt was made in the details of the arch to copy the old Norman work with bad effect, especially as it sprung from two conical corbels, reeded and quirked, and with pig-tail scrolls. The original clunch Chancel arch and north doorway were re-erected (as already mentioned) and the stone south doorway also as the sole entrance to the Nave, the north doorway being abolished. The solitary window of the north side of the Nave (of which Kerrich so emphatically remarks "N.B. the only original window remaining") was also swept into oblivion without even a record of it being made for remembrance. Large plain windows with clear glass quarries and having semicircular heads, but otherwise innocent of design or even of 'copyism', were spread all over the place, flooding it with light, whereas the original Church was conspicuously gloomy, thus rushing from one extreme to the other. I have found no records of the height of the original walls, and content myself with inferences only. It is clear that the new walls were raised considerably. They were faced outside with black flints with red brick quoins and bands (an undoubted innovation) and inside with brick, while the heart of the walls (average two-thirds of the thickness) was filled in with pebbles, small broken stone, flint knappings, &c., shewing that all the debris from pulling down was used, and that the original walls were built of rubble, stone and pebbles. The larger of the pebbles were used as external facings below the plinth to save flints; ordinary Gothic buttresses were built to the quoins and side walls, and fortunately, for probably without them the whole place would have fallen down some years since. We possess one reminder at least of the Norman age and character of the original Church in a brick arcaded corbel-table under the eaves, a feature correct in character, but which had never hitherto existed in connection with the building. The roof of this comparatively tremendous span had no tie, but was constructed on the then general principle of cross-bracing, i.e. the length of the rafter was divided into three (about) equal portions, and from the top of the lower length a timber was carried across to the corresponding rafter of the opposite side of the roof and secured at the top of the middle length, and *vice versa*. These braces were each half the thickness of the rafters and were doubled, two to each pair of rafters from each side of the roof, crossing each other at the middle of the height over the central axis of the roof, and were bolted through at each end and at the intersections. Consequently all the strain of the weight and thrust of the roof became a cross strain upon the bolts, and was thus transferred to the top of the walls by the feet of the rafters. The roof, chancel and all, were covered with

thick rough tiles, extra heavy but poor in quality, which were laid in party coloured bands to look pretty. Thus this new building of excessive span had a roof of the heaviest class constructed upon the weakest principle, and carried upon loftier walls of the rottenest build practicable. True, the foundations were carried down deep into the gault, but this appears to have increased the instability on account of its giving and heaving after exposure to the air in excavating. It is not therefore surprising that very early this structure showed signs of giving way, and that it became necessary to insert a very strong wrought iron tie rod across the Nave from the north to the south walls close in front of the Chancel arch to take some of the strain off the responds of the arch and the east wall and buttresses, as the arch had given way and become dangerous. At the present date a settlement has caused a slight fracture all up through the south wall, which has also given way a little along the top on account of the thrust of the roof. The north wall has given badly to the strain of the roof, thereby relieving the south wall somewhat, and is leaning over outwards in the whole height, having the peculiarity of a complete bend in the length along the top owing no doubt to its bond with the east and west walls. But this same strain, bonding, and some settlement in the foundation, has caused two bad fractures through the easternmost and westernmost windows. The west wall with its comparatively lofty gable and great breadth and no buttresses except low down at the north and south ends, is fractured at three places right up and through, that at the north corner being very bad, whilst it is leaning over bodily outwards toward the road and drawing away from the roof. The east wall of the Nave is very badly fractured over the Chancel arch, as already mentioned, the arch being badly distorted, and appearing likely to give way at any time, and the stones of the non-descript cross let into the gable over the arch falling into the Nave. A peculiarity is that the arch and north end of the east wall has come away from the tower as shewn by the very bad fracture up and down the junction with the tower over the south haunch of the arch, and which shews that the gaunt ugly tower still stands upright, as was proved by plumbing it all round. The floor is disturbed, has sunk out of level, and opened, while there is a cavity about 2 inches wide all along the north wall. The Chancel walls, floor, &c., are disturbed, but it appears to be mainly owing to its connection with the new Nave, having dragged it over northwards, and to the great weight of the Tower, which settling down bodily has fractured the south wall. It appears certain, that but for the timely introduction of the tie rod across the Chancel arch, the Nave walls would have given away some time ago under the stress of the roof, and the whole fabric would have collapsed and fallen flat to the ground, dragging a great part of the Chancel with it, and practically destroying every vestige of the old original Church. Such an occurrence was as likely to take place during service as at any other time, and the probable consequent loss of life would have



Proposed Restoration of St. Swithin's Church, Isle of Ely.
as designed by F. T. Muller, Architect, Cambridge.



been very serious. It would have been a grave and unique report that the parish had been deprived of Vicar and congregation at one fell blow; but it was not impossible. It was a serious responsibility to induct a new Vicar, without any arrangement or suggestion for dealing with the risk, or any attempt at raising a fund for the minimum of work which was absolutely necessary; and it says much for the courage of the present Vicar, that he at once boldly faced it. It must not be lost sight of that the place is unutterably poor, and the great tithes sequestered to the Ecclesiastical Commission, so that without the generosity of Mr. Cole Ambrose, a principal inhabitant, it would have been practically impossible to raise sufficient funds even to keep the little Church in condition. The ancient and unique little Church has been nearly wiped out, and the vainglorious fabric raised in its place devoid of every Christian feeling, has become little less than a complete wreck. Could such Churches have audible voices how they would groan at the treatment and want of treatment served out to them, and if deceased founders and benefactors could rise from their graves and see their cherished relics there would be great weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. On survey it was found that the roof must come off, the north and east walls and Chancel arch must be taken down, together with the west gable and part of the wall. The accommodation being considerably in excess of the requirements of the Parish, the Vicar decided to reduce the width, and, to maintain the axial line through the centre of the Chancel arch, that both side walls should be rebuilt 3 feet 6 inches inwards, thus reducing the width of the Nave by nearly one-fourth; and consequently lowering the roof. At the same time it was desired to preserve the Norman character of the original Church, the new work and alterations being in the same style. In result I prepared the accompanying design,* retaining as much as possible of the West wall, but strengthened by the three buttresses as shewn, keeping the south doorway in position and utilising the space between it and the new south wall as a Porch with an inner door. At the same time the east wall and gable were to be rebuilt but with a Chancel arch of reduced width and height to suit the narrower building, and the whole recovered with the present tiled roof having circular trusses and iron ties and a barrel vaulted ceiling. Also the windows were to be reduced in height partly to suit the lower ceiling, partly to be in character, and partly to soften the great glare of light. Every part had to be studied with the view of making most use of the old materials, economy of cost being such an important factor. It was impracticable to reconstruct the original Church, as nothing was then known of it, but what was still standing mixed up with the present building; nor would it have been large enough even for the little village, having been probably first built for a different purpose than an ordinary Parish Church. This design was ultimately set

* For this illustration we are indebted to Mr. Mullett's generosity.

aside, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners having undertaken to provide £500, putting forward at the same time a design by their own Architects which had to be accepted. A contract has been made with Messrs. Rands & Son of Wisbech for part of the work, the cost of which will be about £1,300. The scheme of this design is to rebuild the north wall six or seven feet inwards, lower the height of the south wall, rebuild the east and west walls to the same height, with timber framed gables filled in with lath and plaster, the axial line to be preserved by constructing a timber framed colonnade with arched ribs which will turn the space between it and the south wall into an Aisle with a lead covered flat roof, corresponding timber storey posts being raised against the side walls, with timber trusses for the roof over, having heavy tie beams right across the Nave and Aisle, with collar beams, king posts, and curved struts, &c. Practically the roof is to be carried on a permanent timber scaffold erected inside the walls, which will be only enclosing shells. The side windows to remain unaltered, but the west windows to be very much smaller, with an additional one for the Aisle, and a two-light wood window in the gable. The style will partake of the character of Early English with a determined rustic appearance. The Tower remains unaltered and the necessary reparations to the Chancel have to wait for funds. At the time of writing, the work has commenced, and destruction appears inevitable; the once interesting structure must henceforth be regarded as possessing but a small fragment of local history."

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