

MEMORANDA, ACCOMPANIED WITH FIGURES,  
OF

# Mural Paintings,

LATELY DETECTED

IN THE CHURCH OF STOW-BARDOLPH.

COMMUNICATED BY

THE REVEREND GEORGE HENRY DASHWOOD, F.S.A.

IN A LETTER TO

DAWSON TURNER, ESQ., V.P.

MY DEAR SIR,

I send you a few notes, with drawings of some discoveries we have made in the course of repairing the Church of Stow-Bardolph; thinking they may be interesting to the members of our Society at Norwich; and I shall be obliged if you will lay them before the Committee.

Believe me

Yours very truly,

G. H. DASHWOOD.

The Church of Stow-Bardolph, dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity, consists of a nave, 44 feet 6 inches long, by 24 feet 4 inches wide; and a chancel, 31 feet 6 inches in length, by 16 feet 8 inches in width; with a substantial square Norman tower, far from lofty, at the West end. Like but too many of our village churches, it was encumbered with a huge gallery, and disfigured by the insertion of late nondescript windows, with the usual amount of accumulated whitewash on the walls. The roofs of nave and chancel, with the South wall of the former (and, as it eventually turned out, of the

latter also) being found in a very insecure state, the Patron came forward liberally to assist the parish; and it was determined to put the whole into a proper state of repair, under the direction of R. Brandon, Esq., architect, the well-known author of various valuable professional publications; among them of *Perspective Views and Letter-press Descriptions of Parish Churches*, a work of peculiar interest to a Norfolk antiquary, as exhibiting fifteen of the most remarkable of those in our own county.

A very good Early English South door, and Early English Priest's door on the South of the chancel, indicated the building, which succeeded the original Norman, to have been erected between A.D. 1189 and 1272, the period assigned to that style; and, on proceeding to dismantle the chancel and strip the plaster from the walls, we had further proof of the date of the edifice, by the discovery, first, of a double piscina and three sedilia, with an Early English lancet-window above, also blocked up; and, lastly, of an elegant little (and, as I believe, in regard to position, unique) low side-window. The size of the light of this latter is  $25\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height, by  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide, and its distance from the East end is about 30 inches: thus it looked directly upon the high altar. On the exterior is a rather deep rabbet; and it seems probable the opening was closed by a shutter, and not glazed: there is nothing, however, to mark this decisively. Among the numerous suppositions as to the use of these low side-windows, the most favoured appear to be the following. That they were used as confessionals; or for lepers, not admitted within the walls, to receive the sacred elements; or for excommunicated persons doing penance, prior to their re-admission into the church; or to ring a hand-bell at the elevation of the Sacred Host; or for some one to look out, and, by means of a bell, give notice to the people of the approach of the priest. No one theory, however, appears to answer for all the examples of low side-windows adduced: the position of the present one



would, perhaps, most favour the Leper theory, if that of the Confessional be not tenable.

The accompanying lithograph gives a faithful representation of the South side of the chancel, from the East end to the Priest's door, as seen when the plaster and filling up of the several openings were cleared away.

On examining this wall, it was found, as hinted above, in a very unsafe state, indeed so totally unfit to receive the new roof, that it was necessary it should be taken down and rebuilt. This done, the piscina, sedilia, and windows, were restored to their original position. No other traces of painting were discovered in the chancel, than on the East wall, South of the altar, a cross, probably a consecration-cross, such being not uncommonly met with in that position, and some scattered lines on the arches of the lancet-window, sedilia, &c.; showing that the walls had been originally thus marked to imitate stone-work.

While the workmen were engaged about the chancel, I employed myself in chipping off the whitewash from the nave, and immediately came upon remains of colour. Nor was it long before I uncovered a gigantic hand, which could belong to none other than our favourite in Norfolk churches, St. Christopher. This was on the North wall; and in due time I brought to light the upper half of the figure, a drawing of which was exhibited at our January meeting, and is here presented to the reader by the anastatic press. The gallery had been built across the Saint; and the wall below having, at the time of its erection, been replastered, his lower part was destroyed. It is a late painting, probably about the date 1500. Of the panel, which is 8 feet wide, nearly 10 feet of the upper portion remains; so that, when perfect, the whole was probably not less than 15 feet high. The height of the portion of St. Christopher, above the floor of the gallery, was 7 feet 1 inch; that of the child sitting on his shoulder, 4 feet 7 inches. Directly opposite, on the



South wall, I subsequently discovered another picture of the same Saint, of similar gigantic dimensions, but of earlier date, about A.D. 1400; not quite so perfect, but in much better style, and very superior as a work of art. Of him likewise I send an anastatic drawing. His lower half had also been destroyed by the wall having been re-plastered. A scroll proceeding from his mouth is inscribed,

"Parve Puer, quis tu? graviorem non tolleravi."

In answer to which the child replies:

"Non mirans sis tu, nam sum qui cuncta creavi."

This painting I found, in part, covered a still earlier work, a rude representation of the Martyrdom of St. Edmund. The King and Martyr is represented crowned, and bound by the body and legs, as to a tree, his wrists also confined by a cord, while on either side is a figure shooting arrows at him; the one, with head uncovered and his hair standing on end—the other, in a helmet. (*See plate.*)

Returning to the North wall, I detected over the door the two figures of which I exhibited a tracing, here repeated in a reduced size, but which I am unable to appropriate. The one with a book, first disclosed, I thought to be St. Anne; but, upon the whole subject being laid open, it appeared to be a male figure in the act of blessing the humble suppliant before him. These are not in a panel; but the wall is diapered from St. Christopher to the West end. On the other side of this St. Christopher are traces of earlier painting, partly concealed by his panel, so that the subject is not to be made out. Between the windows, both on the North and South sides, the walls are diapered, not with a pattern, like that just mentioned, but with the monogram I.H.S.

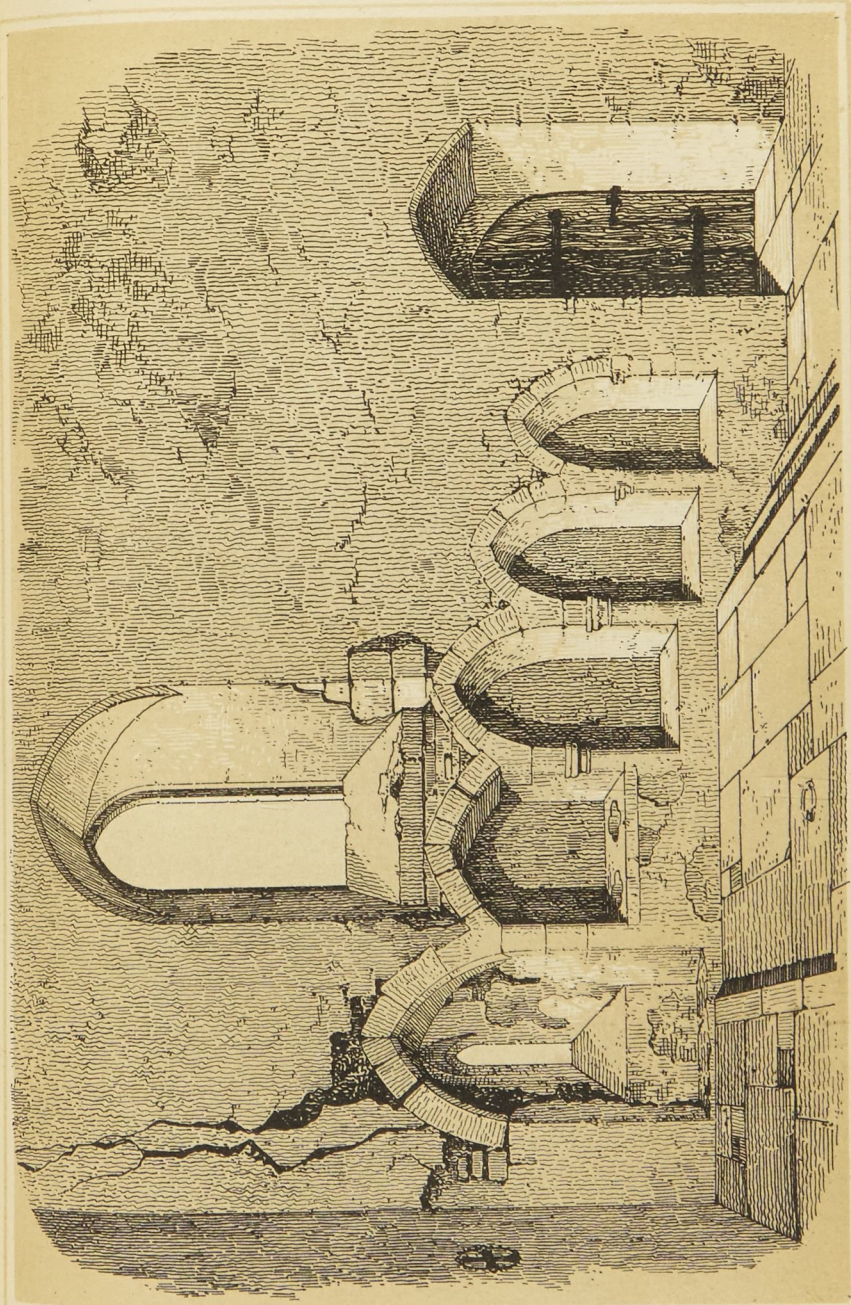
On the left of the chancel arch, and above the spring, was the lower half of a figure in a bright scarlet robe, the upper half destroyed by new plaster; at the feet, a skull and divers bones. On the South side, but below the spring of the arch, were two small panels, one containing a figure in the act of



blessing suppliants; the other apparently the contrary: it struck me they might be illustrative of the awful sentences to be pronounced by our Saviour at the Last Judgment: "Come, ye blessed of my Father"—"Depart from me, ye cursed;" but the painting is rude and too much obliterated for any one to speak with certainty. Immediately over the chancel arch was a shield charged with the cross, and, on either side of it, the nails, and apparently the spear, together with the crown of thorns over its upper limb. Above the shield, which is supported by angels, is a beautiful head with a very youthful face and nimbus (*see plate*): whether there is a cross on the latter I cannot determine. This head I succeeded in detaching from the wall, for exhibition; not, however, till it had been long exposed to the weather, and had suffered in consequence.\* Above this, to the right and left, were two shields with coats of arms: one, those of Beaufort; the other, apparently, Beaufort quarterly with another coat. The shield of Beaufort comes partly over the nimbus of the small head just mentioned. Henry the Fourth granted the manor of Stow-Bardolph, on the attainder of the Lord Bardolph, to Thomas Beaufort, afterwards Duke of Exeter. The painting of the emblems of the Passion and their accompaniments, is therefore most probably prior to 9th Henry IV., the date of the grant of the manor noticed above. Another shield, oval with ornamented border, and, likewise, apparently,

\* To remove this, I pasted some calico (fine canvass might have been better) over the head, and, on *that*, stiff paper; and, when dry, removing the surrounding plaster, I cut down behind with saw blades. This, however, in the present case was not sufficient; as, owing to the extreme roughness of the rubble-work, some of the stones ran out within a quarter of an inch of the surface; and I had to cut away the stone-work to get behind and remove them. When I had detached the plaster from the wall, I backed it with plaster of Paris; and afterwards, moistening the paper and calico till the paste was softened, I stripped them off again. Where the walls are tolerably level and the plaster of uniform thickness, I think by a similar plan many interesting paintings might be preserved, when from circumstances they could not be left in their original situation.





J. K. Colling, del.

SOUTH WALL OF CHANCEL, STOWE BARDOLPH CHURCH, AS UNCOVERED SEPT. 1849.





*Mural Painting of St. Christopher, on the North wall of the Nave  
of Stow-Bardolph Church.*

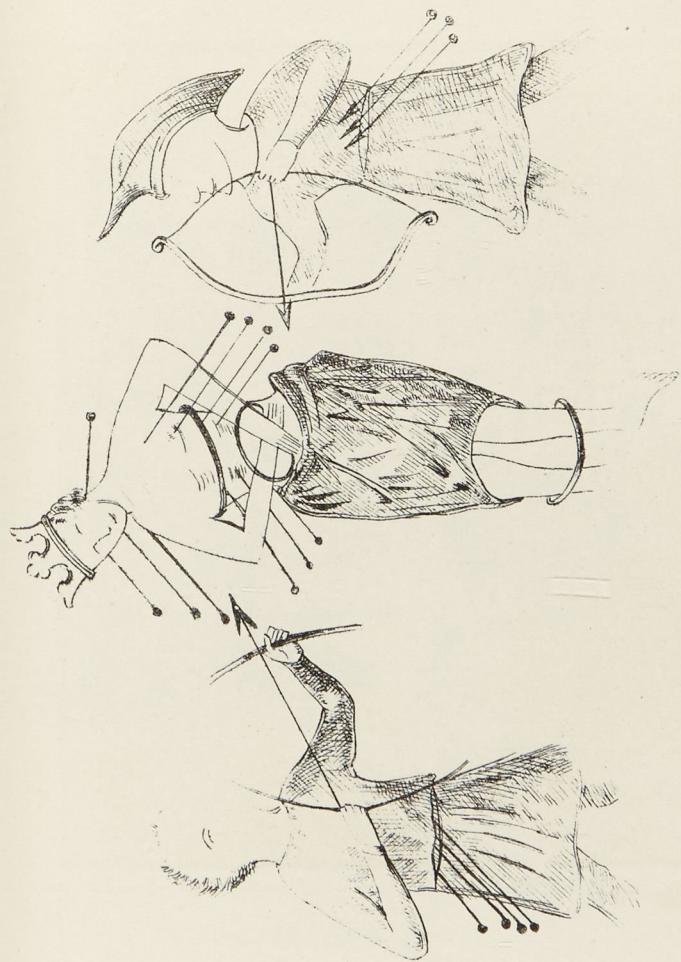
JOSEPH ANASTASIO PRESS, IPSWICH



*S<sup>t</sup>. Christopher from the South wall of the Nave of  
Stowe Bardolph Church, Norfolk.*

COWELL'S ANASTATIO PRESS, IPSWICH.





*Mural Painting of the Martyrdom of St. Edmund, in the Nave  
of Stow-Bardolph Church.*

TOWLES ANASTATIC PRESS, BRIMINGHAM





Cowells' Anaglyphic Press, Ipswich

*Mural Painting in the Nave of Stow-Bardolph Church,  
over the North Door.*





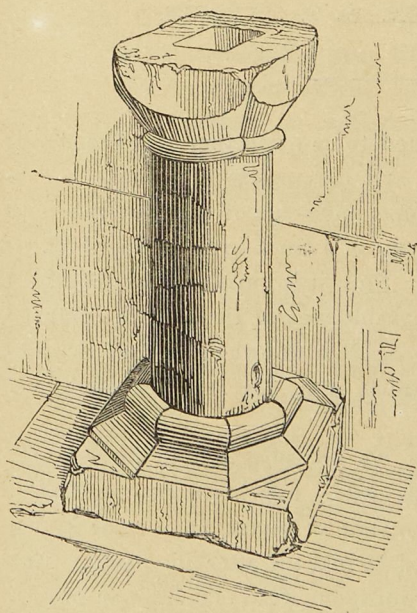
*Mural Painting, in the Nave of Stow-Bardolph Church,  
above the Chancel Arch.*

CCXXV. ANASTATIC PRESS. LONDON.



Beaufort with its quarterings, was visible on the South of the chancel arch, at some little height above the panels which I have supposed to be taken from the Last Judgment; and the intervals on this wall were diapered with the Greek monogram for *Χριστος* in black and red letters.

The screen to the chancel was Jacobean, not of the happiest design: no trace of painting remained on the panels. This has been removed, and will be replaced by a new, *decorated*, oak screen.



In the course of the repairs, the shaft of the Norman piscina, or stoup, or font, of which I annex a wood-cut, was brought to light. It lay in three distinct pieces embedded in the wall. The demolition of the adjoining buttresses disclosed the remains of at least five stone coffins, also broken up, and built into them, so as to show like massive, solid stones. The lid of a sixth, cut into two and turned over for steps

into the chancel, was also discovered; and in the churchyard there still remain four others, quite entire, three with crosses, the fourth worn smooth; all of the ridge-shape. On that taken up within the church, and on the part of one formerly removed from the porch, a cross is carved in relief.