

PARTICULARS

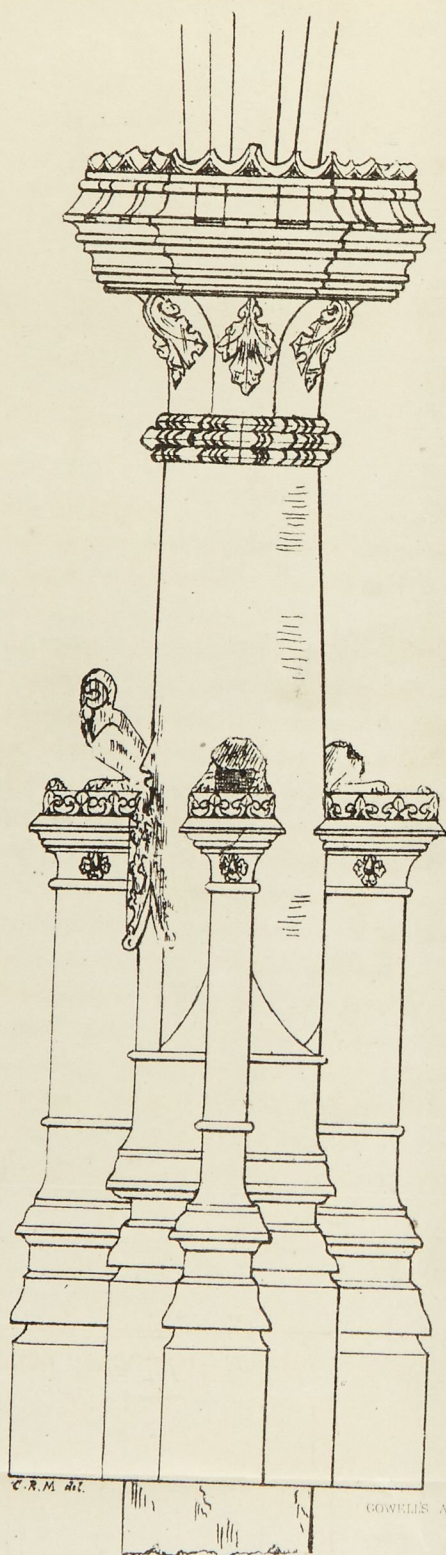
OF THE

Ancient Pulpit at Diss, Norfolk.

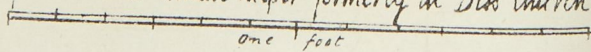
COMMUNICATED

BY THE REV. C. R. MANNING.

THE accompanying engraving represents the only remaining fragment of the original wooden Pulpit, formerly belonging to Diss Church. It stood against the chancel arch, on the North side of the nave. From this position the present Pulpit was removed some years ago; and at the time of the removal this fragment of its predecessor was found behind the boarding, where it had evidently been left as useless lumber. Since that period it has been preserved by the sexton, to whom I am indebted for bringing it to light again. It will be seen that no more than the stem remains: the body of the Pulpit, which was supported on this stem, has altogether disappeared; and it is much to be regretted that an elaborate specimen of ancient church furniture—as, in agreement with the existing portion, it doubtless was—should have been either destroyed by violence, or ruined by neglect. From the marks of severe usage it seems to have sustained, the former cause may perhaps be the true one; but whether its wrongs are to be laid to the charge of Will. Dowsing and his agents, I am not able to say. The stem retains, however, enough of its original character to render the design very apparent. Its richly-moulded base has a cruciform shape, from its four buttresses placed at right angles to each other.



Stem of the Ancient Wooden Pulpit formerly in Diss Church. Norfolk



These once supported as many lions *sejant*, or, possibly, the symbols of the four Evangelists; but at present the lower extremities of one, and the claws of another, are all that is left to shew that they ever existed. Between the main buttresses, there appear to have been lesser ones, rising up into pinnacles: one of these partly remains, and the sockets of two others prove that originally they were not wanting; but the remaining angle, as shewn in the drawing, seems to have been left plain: probably, that side stood against the wall. The shaft, square at the bottom, is chamfered off into a circular form in the middle, and becomes an octagon in its embattled capital, which has been shorn of a crest of foliage, (miscalled the Tudor flower,) but still retains its mouldings, and one only of eight leaves which ornamented the hollow of the neck: three are shewn in the drawing, to represent their original effect.

It is probable that the body of the Pulpit was adorned with paintings, on its several sides, representing the four Doctors of the Church, or other saints, equally uncongenial to the "purifiers" of the seventeenth century: a pulpit so painted remains at Castleacre, and elsewhere. Norfolk and Suffolk were especially rich in this kind of decoration; and, to the credit of these counties, it is probable that the artists employed were *not* foreigners, as has been supposed, but natives, or at least residents in our own neighbourhood. From the manuscript *Accounts of Mettingham College, Suffolk*, in my possession, it appears that two of these artists were Robert Hyclyng, or Jokelyng, and Thomas Barsham of Yarmouth, to whom various payments are set down in these Accounts, for painting "tabulæ," altars, and images. The following may be taken as specimens:

Memorandum: de convencione facta cum Roberto Hyclyng, peyntor, de Norwic' pro summo altari pingendo et ornando cum arte sua meliore tam in

ymaginibus quam in singulis partibus ejusdem; et cum perfecte consummaverit, habebit £20. Item, Roberto Jokelyng pro tabula inferiore alti altaris corrigend' per 2 dies, 6*d*. Item, eidem pro le cowntertabyll pyngend. 40*s*.

Again

Item, solut' Thome Barsham de Jernemuta pro 2 ymaginibus, cum tabernaculis earundem, faciendis pro summo altari, 40*s*. in parte solucionis. Item, solut' Thome de Jernemuta, pro 2 ymaginibus, cum earum tabernaculis, et tabula summi altaris, faciend. et pingend'. 100*s*.

The date of the Diss Pulpit may be judged of from its mouldings and design: it is probably of the same age as the aisles and chancel of the Church; and these, from their windows and the costume of the corbel-heads supporting the dripstones, were probably erected in the early part of the fifteenth century.

