

Ancient Lecterns,

PRESERVED IN NORFOLK CHURCHES.

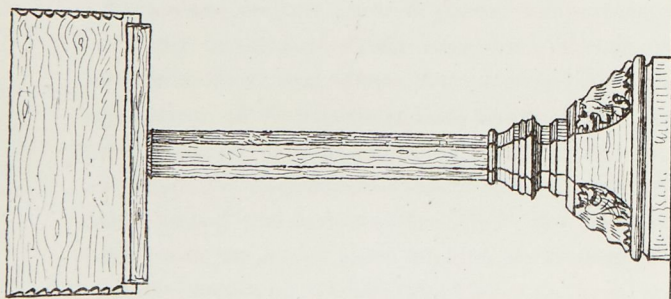
COMMUNICATED BY

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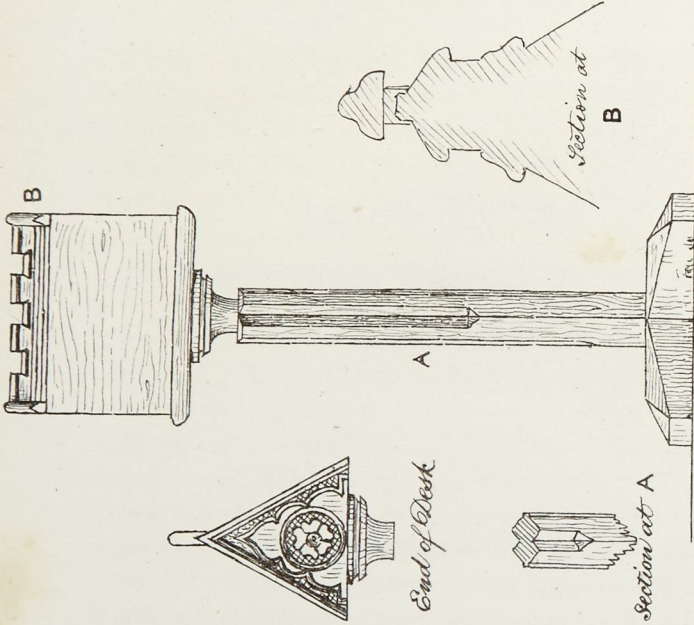
HONORARY SECRETARY.

THE examples of old church-furniture which are occasionally to be met with, still preserved in the parishes to which they belong, are always interesting as examples of ancient usage, and valuable for the excellence of their design. In the eastern counties, especially, where much wood-carving was used, examples are not unfrequent. I do not refer to the ancient screens or *benching* of churches, these being less liable to be disturbed, and therefore in less risk of perishing; but to *moveable* articles, or such as are more likely to be replaced with others, as taste and customs changed. Thus there are a good many ancient pulpits, chests, font-covers, &c., still remaining, several of which have been already noticed in our publications, and others may deserve illustration at a future time. I would now call attention to a somewhat rare class of articles of church-furniture, the LECTERNS; and am able to produce sketches of some of those in our own county with which I am acquainted. There are probably others, unknown to me, and I shall be glad of the assistance of our members in making the list complete.

The Lectern is a desk, or stand, for placing the larger books used in divine service upon, and was made either of



Wooden: Lectern: Stone: Church: Norfolk



Wooden: Lectern: Church: Norfolk

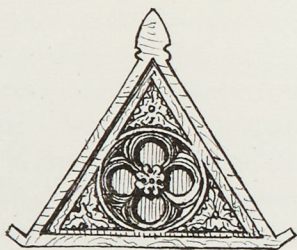
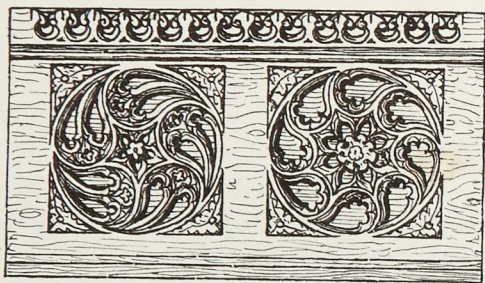
stone, (or marble) brass, or wood. They were used, previous to the Reformation, both for reading the Gospel and Epistle from, at the altar; and also, lower in the choir, for the music books of the clergy who sang the antiphons, &c. They were often enriched with embroidered hangings. An extract from the *Ancient Rites of Durham*, pp. 17, 18, quoted in the *Glossary of Architecture*, gives good evidence of their use:—
 “At the north end of the high altar there was a goodly fine *letteron* of brass, where they sung the Epistle and Gospel, with a great Pelican on the height of it, finely gilt, billing her blood out of her breast to feed her young ones, and her wings spread abroad, whereon lay the book also there was lower down in the quire another *lattern* of brass with an eagle on the height of it, and her wings spread abroad, whereon the monks laid their books when they sung their legends at matins, or other times of service.”

Lecterns were usually made with two sloping desks, but sometimes with only one. An example at Debtling, in Kent, has four sides: and others, of continental design, have as many as six. They appear to have been used from very early times in the church, and are found represented in manuscripts of ancient date. The earliest known existing example is the stone desk dug up at Evesham, in 1813, and engraved in the *Archæologia*, xvii. pl. 23, 24, of the date of 1218; unless another remaining at Crowle church, Worcestershire, is of equal antiquity. The earliest I have met with in Norfolk is at East Harling, of Decorated character. It is of simple but good design, consisting of a lozenge-shaped shaft, with a plain cross-bar for the foot, and a circular moulded capital, supporting a double desk, the top of which is embattled, and the ends ornamented with cinquefoil cusping and diaper-work. One end is pierced with a plain circle, the other has a rose on a diapered ground. This Lectern was engraved from my sketch, in the *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica*, published by the Cambridge Camden Society. The example in Ranworth

church is well known to our members, and though of less merit in design than most others, is particularly interesting from the remains of painted musical notes which are to be seen upon it. The shaft and base are octagonal, and ornamented with a pattern in colours. The desk is of peculiar construction, as will be best seen from the plate in Mr. Dawson Turner's *Illustrations of Norfolk Topography*. (Pref. p. xiv.) The upright back has four staves of music painted on it, with the versicle, "Gloria tibi, Domine, qui natus es de origine, cum Patre, Sancti spiritu, in sēp̄it̄na secula. Amen." On the front is painted an eagle, with a scroll in its mouth,—“In principio erat verbum.” This Lectern is a very curious example, and deserves careful preservation.

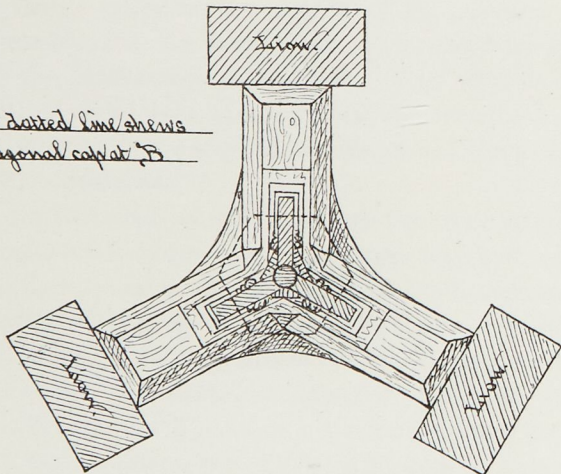
Another good specimen of a Lectern of the fifteenth century remains in Scole church, near Diss, and has also been engraved in the *Instrumenta Ecclesiastica*. It consists of an octagonal stem without a capital, on a square base, having a spreading leaf carved at each angle, and supporting a plain desk. It is a simple and valuable model for imitation. A fourth exists in the church of St. Michael at Thorn, Norwich, and has been engraved in the Norwich volume of the Archæological Institute. The stem is octagonal, with moulded base and capital of the same form; the ridge of the desk has a cresting of foliage, and the end is pierced with a quatrefoil.

In Redenhall church there are two very interesting examples of Lecterns. One is a large and fine one of brass, the desk being in the form of a double-headed eagle. The shaft is elaborately moulded, and supported on lions. It is said that this Lectern was found in cleaning out a moat on the Gawdy Hall estate, in the parish. Its date is of the fifteenth century. The other is a curious wooden one, probably not earlier than about 1500. The desk is supported on a circular banded shaft, and the base is square, having at each angle a toad or frog in a squatting attitude.



Gable Finial

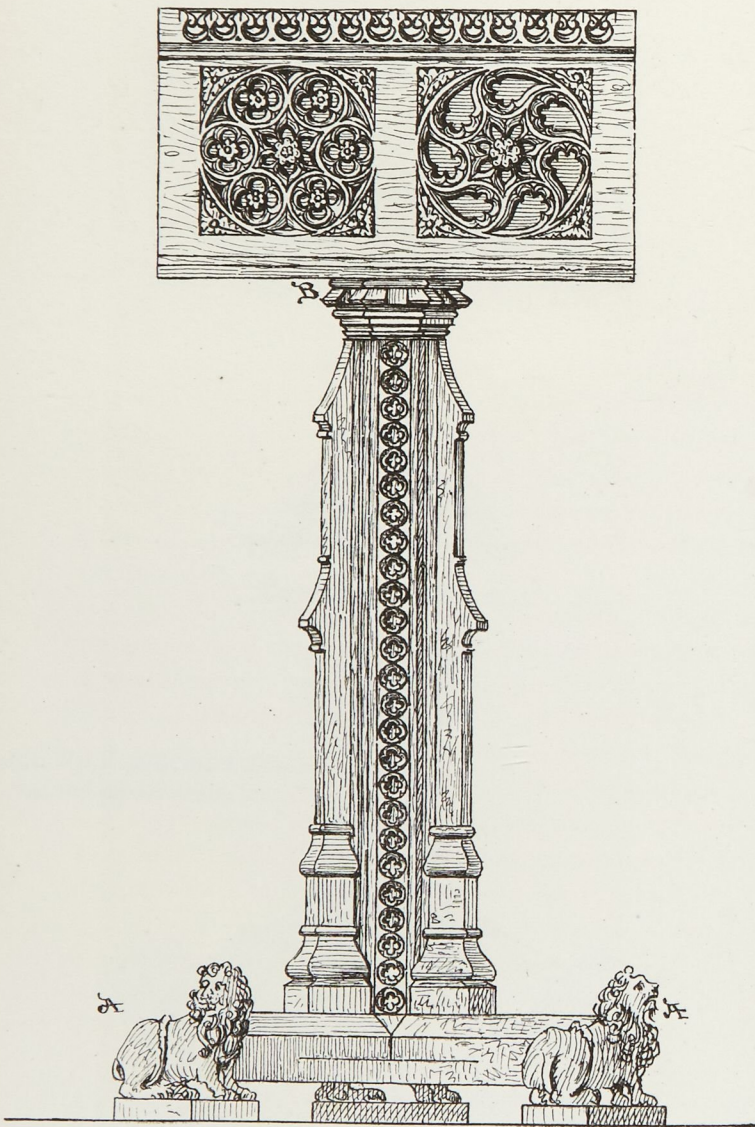
Note the dotted line shows
the hexagonal capital B



Plan of B

Tracery in St. Stephen's Church, Norfolk.

Scale, 1/3 of an inch to a Foot.



Side View

Lectern in Shipham Church Norfolk.
Scale $1\frac{1}{2}$ of an Inch to a Foot.

The finest, however, of the wooden Lecterns in Norfolk has never yet been published. It was inspected by those of our members who joined the Watton excursion meeting, in *Shipdham* church, and the Committee have since procured an excellent drawing of it, executed by Mr. J. T. Lee, architect, an engraving of which is here given. The design of this Lectern is unusual and of great beauty. Indeed, it is remarkable how much variety of design is to be seen in these as well as in all other specimens of ancient work. While modern invention can seldom reach beyond some familiar type without offending the eye with bad taste or inappropriate style, the old examples are ever presenting fresh varieties of design, and yet each preserves a fitness of character and beauty which renders it pleasing and harmonious. The truth and reality of an artificer's business in those days seems to have been expressed in the work of his hands. The Shipdham Lectern is constructed with a triangular shaft composed of three buttresses rising to the full height of the shaft, and the angles between the buttresses are ornamented with a line of small quatrefoils from the top to the bottom. The shaft rests on a base of three members, each terminated by a lion *sejant*. An embattled capital supports the desk, which is of the usual double form, and has its sides very richly carved with tracery of dissimilar design; the ends are also filled in with quatrefoils and foliage. A cresting of leaves forms the ridge. The desk of this Lectern was restored about fourteen years ago, but the rest is all original. It is an admirable specimen of Gothic furniture; and as it is much prized in the church where it is preserved, it is to be hoped it will be safe from injury; and together with the curious library in the parvise of the same church, will continue to afford gratification to those who may visit the place.

I have described only such Norfolk Lecterns as are of wood. There are some very fine ones of brass also remaining

in the county, but which have been illustrated already in various publications. The brass Lectern is always in the shape of an eagle, or pelican. The following is a list of such Lecterns, of whatever material, with which I am acquainted.

NORFOLK.

PLACE.	STYLE.	MATERIAL.
Baburgh	Perpendicular	Brass Eagle
Dereham, East	Ditto	Ditto
Harling, East	Decorated	Wood
Lynn, St. Margaret	Perpendicular	Brass
„ St. Nicholas' Chapel	Ditto	Ditto
Norwich, Cathedral	Ditto	Ditto
„ St. Gregory	Ditto	Ditto
„ St. Michael at Thorn	Ditto	Wood
Ranworth	Ditto	Ditto
Redenhall	Ditto	Brass
„	Ditto	Wood
Scole	Ditto	Ditto
Shipdham	Ditto	Ditto
Wiggenhall St. Mary	Ditto	Brass

Aldbury, Bucks	Perpendicular	Wood
Astbury, Cheshire	Ditto	Ditto
Blythburgh, Suffolk	Ditto	Ditto
Bridgewater, Somersetshire	Ditto	Ditto
Bristol, St. Mary le Port	Ditto	Brass
„ St. Mary Redeliff	Ditto	Ditto
Bury, Huntingdonshire	Early Decorated	Wood
Cambridge, Christ's College	Perpendicular	Brass
„ King's College	Ditto	Ditto
Campden, Gloucestershire	Ditto	Ditto
Cavendish, Suffolk	Ditto	Ditto
Clare, Suffolk	Ditto	Ditto
Coventry, Trinity Church	Ditto	Ditto
Croft, Lincolnshire	Perpendicular	Brass
Crowle, Worcestershire	Ditto	Ditto

PLACE.	STYLE.	MATERIAL.
Croydon, Surrey	Ditto	Ditto
Debting, Kent	Ditto	Wood
Eton College	Ditto	Brass
Evesham	1218	Marble
Hawstead, Suffolk	Perpendicular	Wood
Hendred, Berks	Late Perpendicular	Ditto
Horkesley, Little, Essex	Perpendicular	Ditto
Isleham, Cambridgeshire	Ditto	Brass
Islip, Oxfordshire	1680	Wood
Leighton Buzzard, Beds	Decorated	Wooden Eagle
Lenham, Kent		Wood
Leverington, Cambridgeshire	Perpendicular	Brass
Lingfield, Surrey	Ditto	Wood
Littlebury, Essex	Ditto	Ditto
Lowestoft, Suffolk	Ditto	Brass
Monksilver, Somersetshire	Ditto	Wooden Eagle
Newport, Essex	Ditto	Wood
Oxford, Magdalen College	Ditto	Brass
„ Merton College	Ditto	Ditto
Ramsey, Hunts	Ditto	Wood
Salisbury, St. Martin	Ditto	Brass
Southampton, Holy Rood	Ditto	Ditto
„ St. Michael	Ditto	Ditto
Southwell Minster	Ditto	Ditto
St. Alban's, St. Stephen's	Ditto	Ditto
Swanscombe, Kent	Ditto	Wood
Sutton, Long, Lincolnshire	Ditto	Brass
Wednesbury, Staffordshire		Wood
Wells Cathedral		Brass
Wingfield, Suffolk	Perpendicular	Wood
Yeovil, Somersetshire	Ditto	Brass