

Notes on Sculthorpe Church.

COMMUNICATED BY

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In a paper read not very long since at one of the meetings of the Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society, the remark occurs "that we Archæologists are too apt to isolate our objects of interest, and not sufficiently to view them in their chronological and historical surroundings;" and it appears indeed to be true that the province of the Archæologist is, not only to cherish the abounding relics and monuments of the past,—to rescue, to preserve, and to elucidate,—but also to catch the fading impression of human energy still lingering about these, to clothe them anew with the life which is associated with them, and to gather around the historical events of which they afford evidence.

In this view, places and buildings of lesser antiquarian importance, and hitherto overlooked, may arrest attention, and yield objects worthy of notice and memorial. Such an object of interest seems to have presented itself in the church at Sculthorpe, in West Norfolk, where there existed, some years ago, a number of coats of arms, which time and other changes have now swept away, but which were valuable as attesting, in the picturesque language of heraldry, to the connexion, traditionally known, of this church with Sir Robert Knollys,—telling, in quaint shape and lively colour,

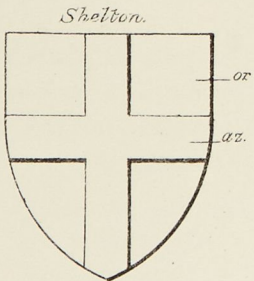
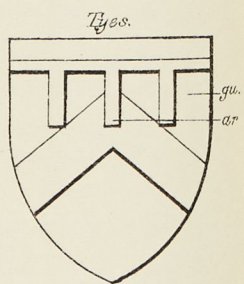
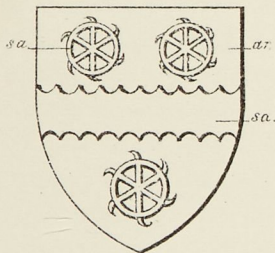
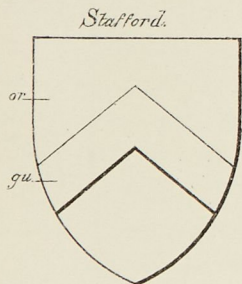
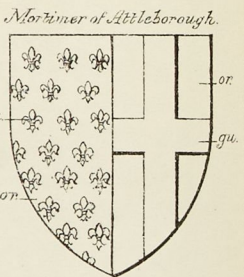
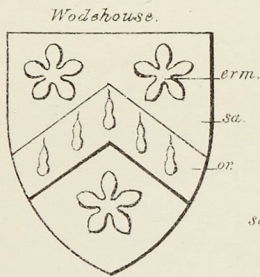
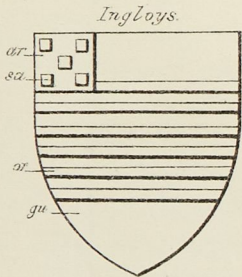
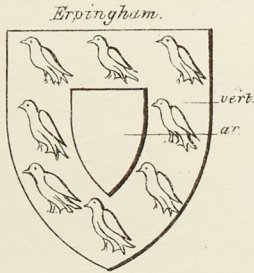
the tale of his companions and adventures in the varied campaigns of the fourteenth century.

During the restoration of this church in 1861, whilst care was taken to preserve, without impairing, any relics of bygone skill or story, it was found that these shields, which would have been well worth cherishing, put up by Sir Robert Knollys, had unfortunately disappeared. They were probably of wood, and were fixed "in the roofo of the church." They had no doubt gradually decayed, and were finally destroyed when the old roof, adorned with carved figures of angels, was removed in 1815. They are, however, minutely described by two eye-witnesses, and were still to be seen in the church little more than a hundred years ago, in the time of Blomefield. By a still earlier observer they are also recorded in detail,—Henry Chitting, the writer of the *Visitation of Norfolk Churches, from 1600 to 1620*.¹ Blomefield mentions sixteen shields.² Both speak of the coat, Argent, a fesse engrailed between three Catherine wheels sable: this occurs also in many churches in Norfolk, accompanying the coat of Knollys, and is attributed to Casteler, in Glover's *Ordinary*; neither antiquarian, in enumerating the shields in Sculthorpe church, assigns a name to it. Sir Robert Knollys' arms are described as occurring in three ways—his simple coat, (Gules, on a chevron arg. three roses of the first) then the same within an azure border, then impaling Beverley; this last repeated "around the church." His arms were also found at this period in other churches in Norfolk;—St. Michael's, Norwich; Harpley, Cromer, North Barsham, Northwold, Mundford.

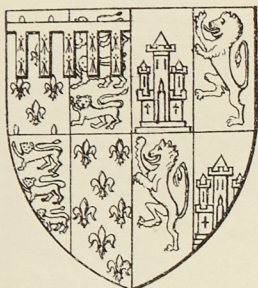
The manuscript of Henry Chitting notices twenty different coats of arms in the roof of the church at Sculthorpe. Eight of these are the same as those which were placed in 1419 by Sir Thomas Erpingham in St. Michael's church at Norwich,

¹ This manuscript is now in the possession of Lord Orford.

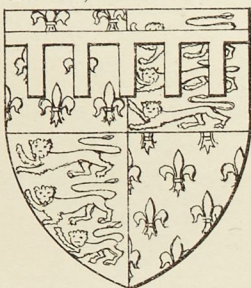
² 8vo. edition, vii. 177.



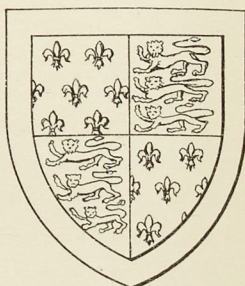
John of Gaunt.



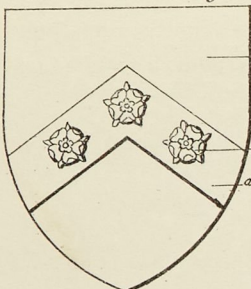
Edward the Black Prince.



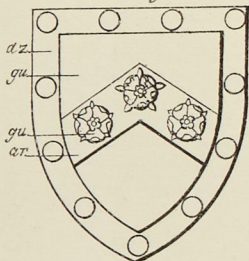
Thomas of Woodstock.



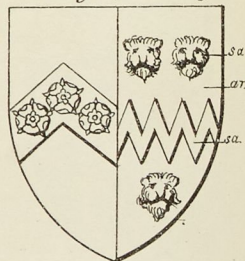
Sir Robert Knollys.



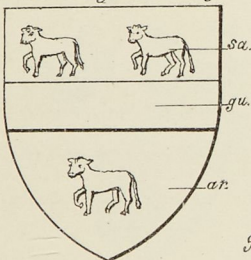
Knollys.



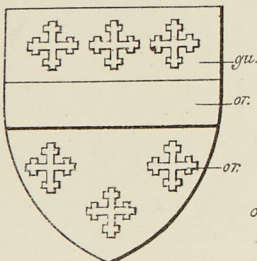
Knollys & Beverley.



Sir Hugh Calverley.



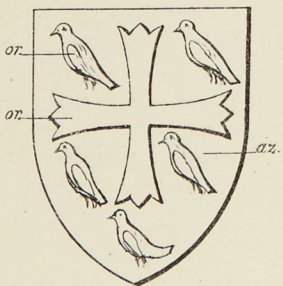
Beauchamp.



De Norwich.



Edward the Confessor.



and which, according to the inscription beneath them, were to commemorate such warriors as had gained for themselves renown and glory in the reign of Edward III. The same idea guided the selection of most of the coats of arms at Sculthorpe, which were, as far as can be gathered, those of Edward the Black Prince; Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester; John of Ghent; Sir Robert Knollys; Edward the Confessor; De Norwich; Sir Hugh Calverley; Beauchamp; Felbrigge; Erpingham; Morley; Wodehouse; Mortimer of Attleborough, impaling, or, a cross gules; Stafford; Tyes; Ingloys; Shelton; and Knollys impaling Beverley. Lastly, the coat described "Argent, a fesse engrailed between three Catherine wheels sable."³

³ Extract from Henry Chitting's *Visitation of Norfolk and Suffolk, A.D. 1600 to 1620*.

SCULTHORPE.

In the roofe of the church,—

Norwich, Azure and gules per pale, a lion ermine.

St. Edward.

England and England with a label of five points argent.

E. Morley.

Norwich.

Mortimer of Attleburgh sideth [*i.e.* impales], Or, a cross gules.

Knowles, Gules, on a chevron argent three roses gules.

Shelton or Mawtby.

England quartereth Castile and Arragon.

Beauchamp, Gules, a fesse inter six cross-crosslets or.

Erpingham.

Ingloys, Gules, six barlets or, on a canton argent five billets sable.

Thomas Woostok, A border argent, England.

Stafford.

Felbrig, Or, a lion gules.

Woodhowse, Sable, a chevron gutté or inter three cinquefoiles ermine.

Gules, a chevron argent with a labell of three points mesme.

Argent, a fesse engrailed inter three Katherine wheeles sable.

Knowles, within a border azure bezanted. Orate p' aia Rob'ti Knowles milit'.

Argent, a fesse gules inter three caulves trippant sable.

Knowles without a border sideth Argent, a fesse dancy inter three leopards' heads sable. [Beverley.]

Knowles sideth the same coat round about the church.

The arms of De Norwich were placed in the church from the connection of the family with Sculthorpe. "Shelton" and "Mawtby" bore almost a similar shield; the one here was probably that of Sir Ralph Shelton, of Great Snoring, who had been at the battle of Crescy. The arms of the Black Prince in this case had a label of five points instead of three. An example of this is engraved in Boutell's *Manual of Heraldry*; where it is mentioned that the Prince used a seal with a silver label of five points. The badge of Edward the Confessor was impaled by Richard II.; it may have been added to the other royal shields in this church in remembrance of Edward III., whose patron saint he was, and who had placed the arms of "St. Edward," it is supposed for that reason, in St. Stephen's Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

Of Sir Robert Knollys no distinct biography appears to have been written, but from many sources, details of his life and doings may be ascertained, and a picture formed of his long and successful career. Of this career Froissart affords the most interesting particulars. Much of the history of Sir Robert Knollys is preserved in the vivid and romantic pages of the old chronicler, and the notices of more modern writers seem dull and unreal in comparison with his contemporary descriptions; but facts and traditions have been gathered and published by later research: to Weever, Blomefield, and more recently to Mr. J. G. Nichols, we owe information conveyed in their accounts of the several churches with which Sir Robert Knollys was connected. He is also commemorated in *A Chronicle of London, from 1089 to 1483*, written in the fifteenth century, and in Fabyan's *Chronicle*, published in 1533; also in Fuller's *Worthies*, Dugdale's *Monasticon*, Boothroyd's *History of Pontefract*, and in other chronicles and histories, mediæval and modern.

It was in the stirring times of Edward III. that he first took arms, about the year 1351, and this was the commencement of a series of foreign expeditions or campaigns,

which, with an intervening period of seven years, when he resided in Brittany, occupied the following thirty years of his life. He served during this eventful time under three, successively, of the sons of Edward III.,—the Black Prince, John of Gaunt, and Thomas of Woodstock; and was engaged repeatedly in those celebrated wars where the best and bravest of her knights so often turned the fortunes of the day to England's glory. Among these, Sir Robert Knollys seems to have had one chosen friend and comrade, Sir Hugh Calverley; and the two Cheshire knights performed together many congenial feats of arms. One of the first of these—the account of which is the earliest mention of Sir Robert Knollys' military life, then begun, at thirty-six, in the prime and flower of his age—was the combat between thirty English and thirty Bretons, which was arranged between the French and English generals in the hope of ending the incessant struggles and bloodshed of which Brittany was the scene in 1351, and which is known as the battle of *Trente*. "The place appointed for it was at the half-way oak-tree between Josselin and Ploermel, and the day fixed the 27th of March, the fourth Sunday in Lent. Each combatant chose what arms he liked. The advantage at first was for the English, but after the greater part of both sides had been killed, the Bretons at last gained the day."⁴

Five years later he accompanied the Black Prince to France. To him was given the command of part of the English army, and he was one of those, who, in that short and marvellous struggle at Poitiers, where eight thousand English put to flight seven times their number, shared the perils and triumphs of the day.

After this he made two more campaigns before he again joined the immediate army of the Prince of Wales. The first in 1358, when he assisted in the war made upon France

⁴ Froissart, also Fuller's *Worthies*, p. 179.

by the King of Navarre, which lasted about two years. Some of its incidents are described in Fabyan's *Chronicle*—"The 2nd day of Maye was wonne by Sir Robert Knolles and his company, a towne called Chasteleyn sur Louvayn, and pillid it. And after wyth their pillage and prisoners, the sayd Englishmen rode to the new castell upon Loyre And then the sayde Sir Robert Knolles, with aide of the king's men, daily wonne many townes and strongholds in Bretagne, 1359." In Holinshed's *Chronicle* we are told that "Sir Robert Knolles, with other captains and men of war, upon the tenth day of March, scaled the walls of the citie of Auxerre, and behaved so manfullie that they were masters of the town before the sun was up. They got exceeding much by the spoil of that city and by ransoming the prisoners. The citizens agreed to give to Sir Robert Knolles gold which amounted to the sum of twelve thousand and five hundred pounds."⁵

These and similar successes, and their substantial results, disinclined Sir Robert Knollys to lay down his arms, and when peace was made between France and England in 1360 he joined the Free Companies, and, with Sir John Chandos and other well-known knights, took the side, so long supported by England, of the Count de Montfort in the contest for Brittany, which still remained undecided. De Montfort, with the powerful aid of these valiant adherents, succeeded in his object; Charles of Blois, the rival claimant, was killed in battle; Du Guesclin, the famous general, taken prisoner; and in return for the important services which placed him in possession of the dukedom, he granted estates and the castles of Derval and Le Rouge to Sir Robert Knollys in the year 1364.

Sir Hugh Calverley, who had also joined the Companions, served soon after this in Spain, when the brother of the King of Castile deposed him and established himself upon

⁵ Holinshed's *Chronicle*, under Edward III., 1358.

the throne; but Robert Knollys was not of this expedition, and, indeed, although he was for some time a member of the Free Companies, his services were consistently given to the English side, and the causes they espoused. In 1367 he, with the other knights companions and many thousand soldiers, rallied anew round their old banner, and fought under the Black Prince when he invaded Spain to replace Pedro the Cruel upon the throne of Castile. Then was gained the battle of Najara, and the enterprise was, as to its special object, successful; but months of hardship to the Prince and his followers ensued, and even then had begun the lingering illness which afterwards deprived these gallant knights of their royal leader. The Prince's army broke up; he himself retired to his own province of Aquitaine, and Sir Robert Knollys took up his abode for a time in Brittany.

Half-way between Rennes and Nantes is the small village of Derval, where the castle stood which was his Breton home and stronghold, and which he had possessed since 1364. That he remained here in this interval (the year 1368) is probable; and it was from this place that in 1369 he set out to aid the Black Prince when Aquitaine rose in revolt, and the war between France and England was renewed. "Sir Robert Knolles resided in Brittany, where he had a fine and large estate. He had always been a good and loyal Englishman, and had served under the King of England and the Prince of Wales in their different expeditions, by whom he was much loved. Having heard that the French were carrying on a disastrous war against the Prince, and meant to take from him his inheritance of Aquitaine, which he had assisted in gaining for him, he collected as many men-at-arms as he possibly could, and went with them to serve the Prince of Wales at his own cost and charges. He set out from his castle at Derval, landed at La Rochelle, and took the road to Angoulême. The Prince and Princess were exceedingly pleased to see

Sir Robert, and it seemed they could not do enough to show it. The Prince appointed him captain of the knights and squires of his household, out of love to him, and as a reward for his valour and honour. When all preparations were made, Sir Robert set out to meet the French, and, joined by Sir John Chandos, proceeded to lay siege to many French towns.”⁶

This was the prelude to what almost immediately followed, —his summons to England to command the expedition of 1370, that on which his fame chiefly rests, and which is always chronicled as his greatest undertaking.

The art of war, as then practised, without the trained and paid strength of a regular standing army, and without any general or skilled use of fire-arms, enhanced the importance of individual attributes, rendering invaluable such soldiers as Robert Knollys and others of his stamp, whose personal prowess and enterprise, and zeal in bringing followers into the field, assisted so greatly the military operations of those times.

Many writers witness to the remarkable bravery and capacity of Knollys; qualities for which he was prized by the King, envied by the nobles, “loved by the English, feared by the French,”⁷ “*le véritable démon de la guerre*,”⁸ who, “on account of his consummate courage, made the other English generals less formidable to the French.”⁷

With such fitting qualifications, it is not surprising that King Edward desired to engage him to make another effort in the English cause, then overshadowed by the coming cloud of disaster; and he had not been a month at Derval, after his return from Aquitaine, before “the King of England sent him positive orders to set out without delay, and cross the sea to him in England. Sir Robert willingly

⁶ Froissart.

⁷ Fuller's *Worthies*.

⁸ *History of the Orders of Knighthood*, by Sir Harris Nicolas, vol. i., p. 46.

obeyed this summons, and, at the request of the King, undertook an expedition into France. He entered it with a large body of men,⁹ and marched through the kingdom with a magnificence for which the people and the rich provinces paid dearly."¹ The army, we are told, advanced to the gates of Paris, where King Charles V. from his palace watched the fire and smoke of the enemy. "In despite of the power of the French, he drove the people before him like sheep, destroying towns, castles, and cities, in such a manner and number, that, long after, in memory of this act, the sharp points and gable ends of overthrown houses were commonly called Knolles' mitres."²

But these successes, although they contributed to his reputation, could not retrieve the cause he had undertaken to assist. The Black Prince returned to England, Sir Robert Knollys, partly in consequence of some differences which arose between him and others in command, retired into Brittany, thus closing the expedition of 1370. This, with the two campaigns fought under the Black Prince, formed the principal epochs of his military life. A time of comparative peace and retirement followed; "he gave orders to all his men at arms and archers, to go where they could find most profit, and several returned to England."

He was still in Brittany, governor of the castle of Brest, in 1377.

In 1376 the Black Prince died. We can imagine how, during those calmer years, the faithful soldier, from his castle of Derval, watched with sympathy and grief the untimely fading of "the flower of English chivalry;" mindful of the welcome hour when first, in 1356, he had entered the congenial service of the illustrious prince; recalling the valour and courtesy successively so conspicuous on the

⁹ Hume says, "at the head of thirty thousand men."

¹ Froissart.

² Fuller.

eventful day at Poitiers, when he may himself have been an eye-witness to the supper after the battle, at which the prince remained standing to serve his royal captive; remembering too the kindness and the favour with which his own services to the prince had been requited, which made the loss so personal, his recollections so dear; and the bright heroic qualities, pre-eminently characteristic of their possessor, but whose reflection was shed over his followers, so that "Ich dien" and "Hoch Muth" seemed not only the prince's own motto, but the watchword of all around him. Whether Sir Robert Knollys visited England during the four years of seclusion and suffering which preceded the death of Edward does not appear, and whether he was one of the large number who, at the last solemn moment, passed through his chamber³ to take a farewell look at the dying prince, we know not; but he at any rate shared in the universal sorrow his premature death occasioned, when even at Paris funeral masses were performed for the dead, shadowing forth the impressive pomp of the final scene at Canterbury.

But the services of Sir Robert Knollys to the Plantagenets did not die with the Prince of Wales; he continued to assist the royal princes in the wars which they subsequently undertook, and we find him once more, in 1378, actively resuming his profession of arms, and joining John of Gaunt in one of his foreign expeditions. Two years later he was with Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, when he conducted an army into France on behalf of the Duke of Brittany. Peace was however made by the Duke with the King of France, the French war languished, and Sir Robert Knollys returned to England to end his active career by a timely service to the young King Richard II. The rebellion headed by Wat Tyler broke out, disturbed the peace of London, and perilled the safety of Richard. This was repressed by the remarkable courage of the boy-king, then

³ *Memorials of Canterbury*, p. 114.

only fifteen years old, who, aided by the veteran soldier, successfully pacified the insurgents.

This was in the month of June, 1381, and in that same month, on the 27th, the manor of Sculthorpe became the property of Sir Robert Knollys.⁴ The heiress of Sir John de Norwich, who had possessed this manor, and whose family had held it since 1317, took the veil and sold her estates at Sculthorpe. These were bought by Sir Robert Knollys, who, now nearly seventy years old, turned his thoughts towards England, ceased to live abroad, and severed his long connexion with Brittany and Aquitaine. It is asserted "that in his old age he resigned the government of Aquitaine."⁵ From this it would seem to have been the case that after the return home or death of the Black Prince, he was given authority over some part of the territory yet remaining to England; but after 1380 he is not again mentioned in the annals of foreign warfare: his active services ended in the loyal assistance he gave to the young king, and it seems conclusive that from this time until his death in 1407, he remained in England, with the exception of one visit to Rome, to fulfil a vow, a pilgrimage undertaken with some idea of religious devotion, but also to visit the hospital which he had there founded in conjunction with Sir Hugh Calverley ten years before.

These last twenty-six years of his life were chiefly employed in devising and carrying out many good and great undertakings; the vast wealth and costly treasure which he had acquired in the French wars being now apparently devoted to these objects.⁶ Of him it could not be said, as so remorsefully by one in later times, "Had I but served my God as I have served my king, He would not in mine age have left me to mine enemies . . .," for, the two grand ideas

⁴ Blomefield, under "Sculthorpe."

⁵ Kennet's *History of England*, and Polydore Vergil's *History of England*.

⁶ Blomefield, vol. vii., 8vo. edition, p. 175, and Kennet's *History of England*.

acted out in his life were these two services, according to the standard of the day—spotless loyalty, brilliant courage, ready self-sacrifice representing the one, and the consecration of time and wealth to pious enterprise fulfilling the other.

In fact, the peculiarity of his career, and that which raises him above his comrades of that time, eminent with him for genius, courage, and devotion as soldiers, is the union of this with the greater merit and higher achievement of deeds of religion and mercy, which were equally a part of his life and character, and for which he is still remembered and commemorated.

The variety and range of these undertakings, and their magnitude, are remarkable. Besides the two Norfolk churches, Harpley and Sculthorpe, one near London, the church of the Carmelites or White Friars, was entirely rebuilt by him.⁷ “He gave bountifully to the building of Rochester bridge, and founded a chapel and chantry at the east end thereof.”⁸ He established a hospital at Rome “for English travellers,” and a hospital and college at Pontefract. The college was intended for a master and six fellows, and the almshouse adjoining for a master, two chaplains, and thirteen poor men and women. His estates at Sculthorpe were settled on this college, which was liberally endowed, the revenue amounting to £180 per annum.⁹ In Queen Elizabeth’s time (1563) it was still called “Knolles’s Almshouse,” and “in it were maintained fifteen aged people; and the Mayor of Pontefract was authorized from time to time to place aged, impotent, and needy persons in the same almshouse, according to the ancient foundation.”¹ This institution was intended by Sir Robert Knollys to have been established at Sculthorpe, or, as it is expressed in Leland’s

⁷ Blomefield. *Dugdale’s Monasticon*, vol. vi., page 1572.

⁸ Fuller’s *Worthies*, and Wcever’s “*Funerall Monuments*.”

⁹ Tanner’s *Notitia Monastica* (Yorkshire) xvi., 4.

¹ Boothroyd’s *History of Pontefract*.

Itinerary, "Syr Robert Knolls that was the notable warrior yn France, builded in this part of Pontefract Trinity Colledge, having a hospital joined to it; he was myndid to have made this colledge at his manor of Skouthorp, three miles from Walsingham, but at the desire of Constance hys wife, he turned his purpose, and made it in the very place of Pontefract where his wife was borne."² This wife Constance was probably a Beverley, as the arms which occurred frequently at Sculthorpe and Harpley impaled with his were borne by a Yorkshire family of that name. She died before him, and was buried at White Friars' church. It is alleged that they had one daughter, Emma Babington, but this seems doubtful; and whether he was the ancestor of the Earls of Banbury or not is a disputed point: he was probably a member of the family from which they descended, but had himself no children.³ In the east window of St. Michael's church at Norwich, before mentioned, the several coats of arms, of which Sir Robert Knollys' is one, were to commemorate such of the knights of Edward III.'s time, belonging to Norfolk and Suffolk, as had died without leaving sons.⁴

Sir Robert had possessed the manor of Sculthorpe four years when he founded at Pontefract the colledge and hospital which he had desired to establish at Sculthorpe. He had probably therefore taken up his abode at the manor-house before this period (1385). More than one writer mentions his having "lived" at Sculthorpe: the restoration

² Leland's *Itinerary*, vol. i. page 41.

³ "The armorial battlements of Harpley Church, Norfolk." From the *Herald and Genealogist*," by J. G. Nichols, F.S.A.

⁴ "An old parchment roll in my possession informs me that the following arms and inscription were fixed in the window In the second pane . . . Rob. Knollys."—*Blomefield*, vol. iv. page 87.

Under the window was an inscription: "Monsieur Thomas Erpingham, Chevalier, a faire cette fenêtre au remembrance de tout les seigneurs, barones, et chivaleres qui sont morts sans issu male, en les contés de Norff. et Suffolk, depuis le coronation de Edwarde III."

of the church, and the large number of commemorative shields placed in it by him testify to his interest in the place. In a list of his property made in 1385, his "house" at "Sculthorpe" is recorded. Much that is now standing of the church is of the period of the later years of his life, the date of the present north aisle according with that of his alleged residence.

His estate here was considerable, and he had lands in adjacent parishes, all of which, with other property in Yorkshire and London, were left by him to Pontefract College. Dugdale gives an enumeration, taken from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 26th of Henry VIII., of the various estates which he settled upon this institution: ⁵—"Collegium sive Domus "elemosinar⁹ de Sancta Trinitate in Pontefract fundat: per "Robertum Knolles, militem.

	£.	s.	d.
" Com Ebor			
" London			
" Norf. Skulthorp, mansio, &c.	27	17	6½
" Dunton, maner ⁹	19	10	0
" Tatterforth, maner ⁹	10	2	2
" Kettlestone maner ⁹	4	8	10
" Burnham maner ⁹	11	0	0
" Overhaye, maner ⁹	8	17	3
" Sherfurth, maner ⁹	2	0	2"

The manor of St Pancras in Middlesex also belonged to him, and was bequeathed to the Carthusian Priory in London.

With these extensive possessions, it is easy to see how his solitary old age was enlivened and occupied by the distribution and assignment of his wealth. What became of his estate in Brittany remains obscure, and he seems to have had no tie with Cheshire, his native county, where he had no inheritance. The position to which he had attained was unaided by the prestige of feudal greatness or distinguished

⁵ *Monasticon*, vol. vi. part 2, page 714.

family, and was the result of mere force of individual qualities.

But although Cheshire did not contribute to his success, he has not been forgotten there. Upon the monument of Sir Hugh Calverley, in Bunbury church, in that county,⁶ are the arms of Knollys and Calverley repeated alternately all round the recumbent effigy; doubtless by the desire of Sir Hugh, his friend and companion in arms, who, like him, lived through all the chances and dangers of war, and ended his days at an advanced age.

Sir Hugh Calverley's arms were placed by Sir Robert in the church at Sculthorpe, when the time came for decorating his finished work.

Continuing the already begun elevation of his predecessors, he added to and enlarged the church, and then, as was the custom in those days, placed around it his own coat of arms and those of the heroes who had shared with him the events and triumphs of his life: first and foremost that of the Black Prince, not, as in Harpley church, his badge, "*pour la pair*," but that well-known device, associated with many an inspiring recollection,—the arms of England with a silver label,—borne by the Prince on the field of battle; the same whose lions and fleur-de-lys still dimly gleam from the faded surcoat hung above the royal tomb in Canterbury cathedral. Then followed the other arms, as before enumerated,—fourteen coats, besides his own with two modifications. A half-effaced painting in the roof of the north aisle, impossible now to identify, is the only trace in the church of armorial decoration, and whether it formed part of the bright diadem which then ornamented the interior cannot be known. An indisputable memorial of the work of Sir Robert Knollys exists however in a shield of stone, which was found in the church some years ago, with his arms carved upon it—a chevron and three roses.

The rebuilding of the church, although no transient

⁶ See Stothard's *Monumental Effigies*, plates 98, 99.

undertaking, was probably finished by himself, for his days were long in the land, and as time passed away he still lived on. The special gift had been his of immunity in danger, and to it was added an extended period of old age, in which to prosecute his more consecrated labours. The last years of his long career, begun under the brilliant auspices of Edward III., and stretched out through the successive reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV., were brought to a peaceful close in his adopted county of Norfolk, where, at the age of ninety-two, under the shadow of his own church tower, he finally passed away from a life more varied, more stirring, more shining with bright deeds than often falls to the lot of a soldier of fortune. He died "in peace and honour" on the 15th of August, 1407, and was buried "about the Feast of the Assumption." The burial took place, according to a previous arrangement, at the White Friars' church, by the side of his wife Constantia. To that far distant destination his body was conveyed in a litter,—a funeral procession doubtless attracting many observers, as, winding out of Sculthorpe on the long-ago summer morning, it moved slowly out of sight in the direction of London.⁷

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Although so large a number of writers have chronicled the life and doings of Sir Robert Knollys, so that particulars are afforded from very various sources, yet these are so unconnected and desultory, that a certain indistinctness clings to the portrait as it presents itself. The dust of centuries has thickened over it, and hides from us the many picturesque details, the countless incidents, the look, the bearing, the immediate surroundings, which, if still visible,

⁷ Dugdale's *Baronage*, vol. ii. p. 412. Stowe's *Survey of London*, p. 438.
Stowe's *Chronicle*, p. 334, under Henry IV.

would be the points of light to enliven and enrich the subject; but still a figure is discernible whose natural force and determination of character seem to have stamped the circumstances and actions of his life, lending zeal to service, constancy to purpose, and causing faith to blossom in those good works which had manifestly less to do with a selfish superstition than with a true and wide charity to the world around him.

But whilst the most remarkable of those associated with the church at Sculthorpe, and its special benefactor, he was not its founder. Some three hundred years before this time there is no doubt that a church existed; it is noticed in *Domesday Book*; and further evidence was lately afforded, when in preparing the foundations for an addition due west of the nave, traces of an ancient tower were found, showing that the church had originally been built in the more usual form, instead of, as afterwards designed, with the tower placed on the south side of the nave. This second tower bears evidence of a somewhat earlier time than the days of Sir Robert Knollys, and competent judges have given it the date of the latter part of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century. The proportions are beautiful, and it still forms the best feature of the church:—its masonry, unscathed by the rough exigencies of many centuries of Norfolk climate, as sharp, solid, and well-defined as on the day it was completed. The situation, projecting south of the nave, made its arched doorways the principal entrance to the church. It was probably the work of the family of De Norwich, who, at the time indicated, held the manor. The church, as reconstructed by Sir Robert Knollys, appears to have consisted of nave, north aisle, and chancel. The chancel must have been a large one; its foundations only remain, about ten feet beyond the present building. In 1470 its “high altar”^s was still in full use. The north

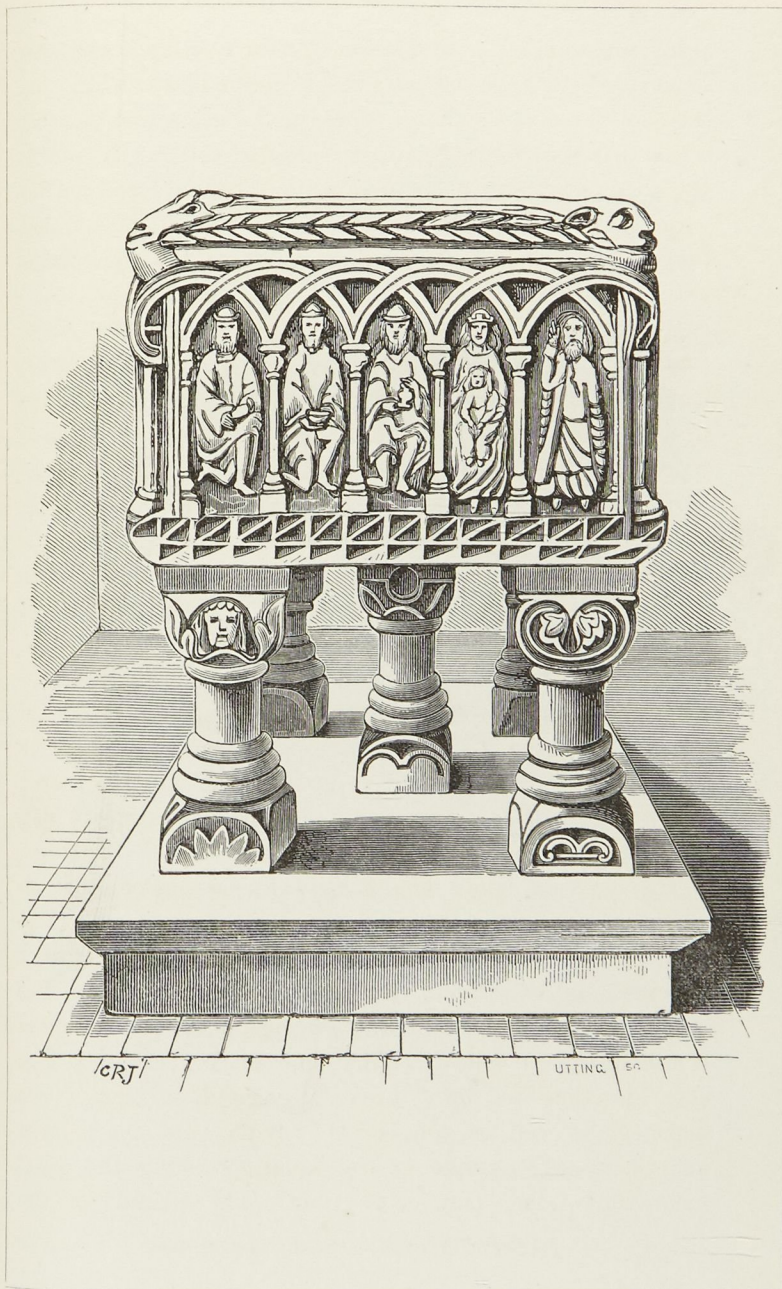
^s Will of Henry Unton, August, 1470

aisle, more abiding, is in excellent preservation, and contains some small stone corbels, alternately heads and shields. In three of these is carved a Catherine wheel, a coat of arms which has sometimes been attributed to the family of De Boys. One of this name was rector of Sculthorpe at the very moment of the restorations by Sir Robert Knollys, and they were probably his arms which were thus associated with the new church.

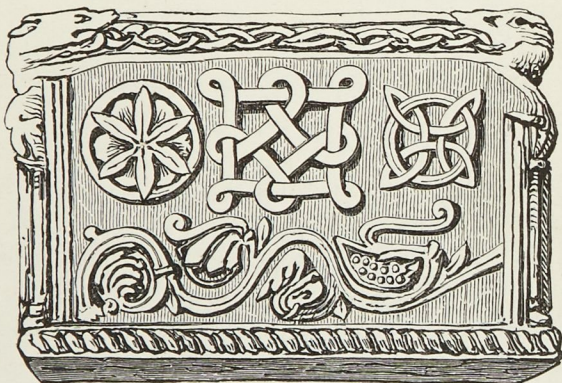
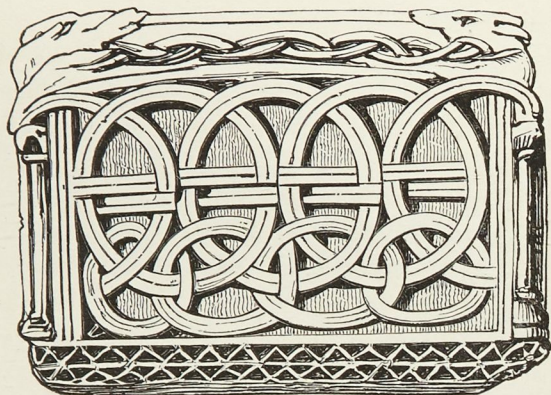
But although the rest of the armorial decorations—links connecting this quiet locality and its village church with historical personages and events—have faded and disappeared, other memorials of a different kind of interest remain. The chief of these is the Font, a fine specimen of the Norman style, in massive square form, elaborately carved. From the resemblance of this font to another in the neighbourhood,—one less ornamented, but of the same date and form, that at Toftrees,—and from the fact that other relics of Norman work—fragments of stones and pillars—have been found in Sculthorpe church, it would seem not improbable that this font was originally made and intended for the place it has so long occupied, and was carefully preserved, with the reverence attached to its sacred mission, through the several changes and renovations which passed over the building in bygone times.

The block of stone, some three feet square, is enriched on all four sides with sculptures, and one of these is cited⁹ as displaying an unusually early instance of the Virgin Mother crowned, and bearing in her arms the infant Christ. The carving of the face, crown, and waving hair of the Madonna is still clear and delicate. The child on her knee receives the adoration of the “three kings,” whose figures are depicted, as well as that of S. Joseph, and the Virgin and Child, on one side of the square, forming the ornamentation of that part of the font. The attitude of the

⁹ Paley's *Manual of Gothic Architecture*, p. 54.



FONT IN SCULTHORPE CHURCH.



THREE SIDES OF THE FONT IN SCULTHORPE CHURCH.

three wise men answers exactly to the Biblical description—“They saw the young child fell down and worshipped, and presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh:”—kneeling, they offer vases and a bag of gold; each being further represented with a crown, according to tradition. S. Joseph stands on the other side of the Virgin.

The remaining three sides of the font contain patterns of circles, foliage, and other designs; and at each upper corner is a carving of the head of a ram or lion, a slender pillar beneath finishing each angle.

The font was placed in 1861, for its better preservation, upon a new pedestal, consisting of five shafts, copied from that of the Norman font in the church at Toftrees.

After the font perhaps the most noticeable objects in the church are two monuments to the Unton family. The earliest is in memory of Henry Unton, and is the most interesting, not so much from the history of the individual, of whom little can be ascertained, as from the beauty of the brass which commemorates him. He is said to have come from Chorley in Lancashire, and to have purchased estates in Norfolk, and was apparently buried here. Underneath the graceful brass which bears his name—a kneeling figure in armour, with the hands clasped as if in prayer—is this inscription:

Hic iacet Henricus Unton Gentilman quōdam
Cirographon^d dñi Regis de Cōi Banco qui
obiit vicesimo septimo die mensⁱ Augusti
A^o dñi M^occccxx cui^s aīe ppiciet^d deus Amen. ²

² The following note on the word *Cirographorus*, in second line of Unton's inscription, has been offered:—

“If a deed is made by more parties than one, there ought to be as many copies of it as there are parties to it, and each should be cut or indented on the

His will, which is given in Nichols' *Unton Inventories*,³ throws some light upon the circumstances with which he was surrounded, and is the earliest document which has been found relating to the Untons. Henry Unton's brother Hugh was the ancestor of the more distinguished branch of the family, who lived at Wadley in Berkshire, whilst his own descendants settled as merchants in London. The other brass figures in the church are probably those of his son John, with Elizabeth his wife, and their eight children.

The brass in memory of Henry Unton has from time to time attracted attention. It was visited by Weever, and is noticed in his *Funerall Monuments*. Blomefield also mentions it, but without particulars of the individual or family; and Cotman drew it fifty years ago, for his beautiful collection of *Norfolk Brasses*.

top or side to tally with the other, which deed, so made, is called an indenture. Formerly it was usual to write both parts on the same piece of parchment, with some word or letters of the alphabet written between them, through which the parchment was cut, either in a straight or indented line, in such manner as to leave half the word on one part and half on the other. Deeds thus made were denominated Chirographa, the word chirographum being usually that which is divided in making the indenture."—Blackstone, *Commentaries*, vol. ii., p. 296.

The office of *Chirographorus Domini Regis*, held by Sir H. Unton at one period of his life, was so called because that officer engrossed and delivered the indentures or chirographs of the fines acknowledged in the Court of Common Pleas. The officer is of very great antiquity. He is mentioned in the Statutes 2 Hen. IV. c. 8, Westminster 2d. (13 Ed. I.), and 23 Eliz. c. 3. (See 3 Inst. 468).

³ *The Unton Inventories; with Genealogical Notices of the Family of Unton*. By J. G. Nichols, Esq., F.S.A.