

Some Notes on the Ruin in Salthouse Churchyard

BY

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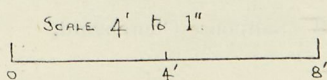
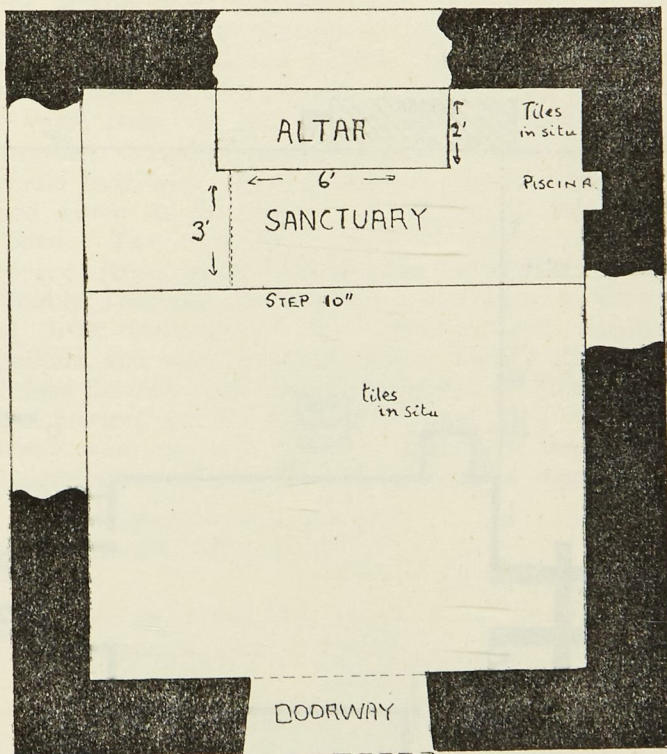
In describing St. Nicholas' Church, Salthouse, to the Society on the occasion of their visit in June, 1935, I mentioned the small ruin in the north-west corner of the churchyard, a building about 20 ft. by 16 ft. in size and now wholly decayed except at the corners, where a certain amount of walling remains. In 1735 this was described as a school, and an account of "Salthouse in Holt Hundred" for 1748 mentions that "in the churchyard on the N. side are the remains of a small house at some distance from the church now called the vestry but supposed by some to have been a school formerly." This is the only documentary evidence that I have been able to obtain.

During the summers of 1936-7 I had the opportunity of excavating this site, and the results point very strongly to its being a consecrated building. Its situation within the churchyard precluded any possibility of clearing the foundations on the exterior of the building, but the interior was excavated down to floor level. The interior dimensions are indicated on Plan A. Its claim to be a consecrated building is supported by the presence of a piscina in the wall of the south-east corner, the moulding of which has

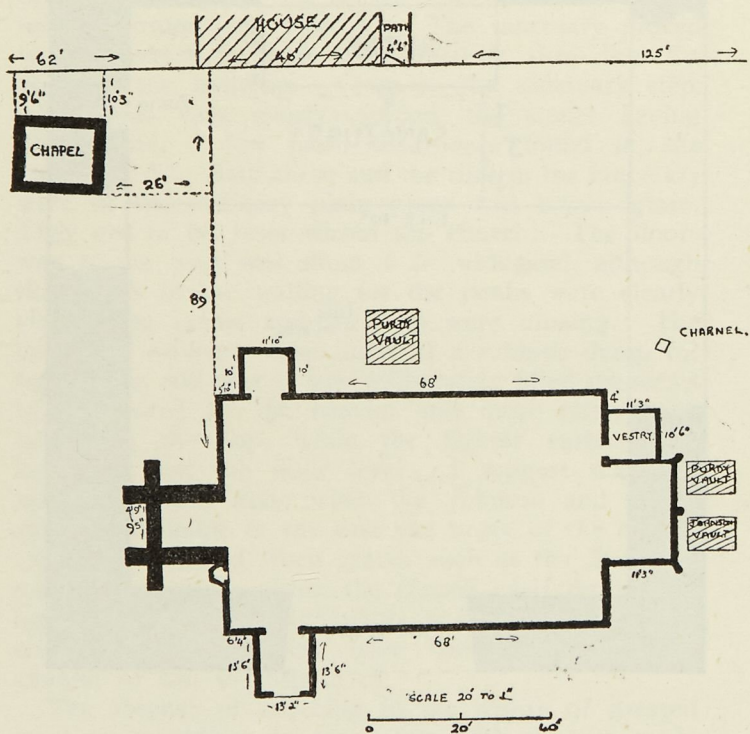
disappeared, but a rough arch can still be discerned and the bowl at the base remains, broken off flush with the wall, but revealing part of the drain in the centre. A line of brickwork, 6 ft. in length and 2 ft. from the eastern wall, indicated the altar base. In front of this is the cement bedding of the sanctuary floor with indents for tiles, all of which have disappeared, except for a few found *in situ* in the eastern corner (see Plan A). The sanctuary proved to be about 5 ft. wide with a 10-in. drop into the body of the building. Close to the sanctuary step, which was very poorly defined, the stones having disappeared, a few more tiles were found *in situ* (see Plan A). Both these and the tiles in the sanctuary were of the ordinary plain green and brown glaze. They are to be reset within the church. The doorway to the west was about 5 ft. wide and, although the spaces in the walling for the jambs were clearly visible, the jambs and the step were missing. The place has evidently been used as a rubbish dump for some time, and that it was deliberately filled up seems to be proved by the heavier and more chalky soil being on the top, while the lighter surface soil appeared next the floor level. I suggest that this may have been done when the Johnson and Purdy vaults were made to the east and north of the church (see Plan B), and when graves such as the Stanforth tombs were made within the church itself during the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There must have been a considerable amount of soil to dispose of.

The absence of anything in the nature of dressed stone or mouldings in connection with the site made it impossible to obtain anything like an accurate date for the building. The only piece found was a fragment of deeply cut E.E. moulding, possibly part of a door jamb or window tracery, in the dust near the floor level, but this need not have had any connection with the site.


As regards finds. In the loose soil directly above the floor level a large number of fragments of stained



A. The Chapel.



B. Salthouse Churchyard,

glass were found. Most of this is of a brown colour, and there are a few pieces which have traces of design; the best find among these being a portion showing St. Dorothy's basket of loaves. This fragment and one or two other fragments have been dated by the Rev. Christopher Woodforde as fifteenth-century work. It seems reasonable to suppose that these may have come from the church, and I suggest that some of it came from the east window when, if it had been smashed outwards, possibly some of the fragments would have been swept up when the vaults were made and carted to the chapel. A number of coins were found. Two very worn silver threepenny pieces, a forged (base metal) Elizabethan twopenny piece, a Double Tournois of Francis I. of France, a number of Irish farthings of the Jacobean and Caroline periods, and some merchant tokens bearing the names (Hans Schultes and Hans Kravwinckel of Nuremberg) and mottoes and all bearing the mark . Of these many were so worn that the inscriptions were illegible, but I give here those on five of them.

HANNS:KRAVWINCKEL:IN:NV:

HEVTRODT:MORGEN:TODTT:

(Heaven's red to-morrow's dead)

HANNS:KRAVWINCKEL:IN:NV:

GOTES:SEGEN:MACHT:REICH:

(God's blessing gives strength)

HANNS:KRAVWINCKEL:IN:NV:

GOTES:REICH:BLIBT:EWICK

(God's kingdom remaineth always)

HANNS:KRAVWINCKEL:IN:NVRENB:

DAS:WORT:GOTES:BLEIBT:EWICK:

(The word of God is everlasting)

HANNS:SCHVLTES:NOR:

GLICK:KVMPT:VON:GOT: (Luck comes from God).

Further finds consisted of a number of large pins, a book clasp, and some pottery (late mediæval), out of which it was possible to reconstruct a shallow cooking bowl heavily charred on the outside.

On Plan B I have attempted to show the chapel in relation to the church and churchyard. There are precedents for chapels separate from churches yet standing within the same consecrated ground. It may have been a chantry or mortuary chapel.

The present St. Nicholas' Church was completed in the year 1503, incorporating the tower of the earlier church. It is extremely unlikely that this small chapel was structurally connected with the earlier church building. Part of the foundations of the earlier church are easily visible to the north of the present church, and the little chapel is too far away to the north-west to have had any direct connection with them.

I have marked on Plan B the old charnel vault (mentioned in the description of 1748) belonging to the earlier church, the entrance of which is covered by a flagstone and which was open and in use within living memory.
