

COWELL'S ANASTATIC PRESS, IPSWICH.

ALFOLD CHURCH.

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BY RALPH NEVILL, Esq., A.R.I.B.A.

IN tracing the history of this Church I shall endeavour as much as possible to avoid repeating such details as may be readily found by the curious in these matters in the county history of Manning and Bray and other similar works, and shall merely quote therefrom as much as is necessary to render this sketch intelligible to the general reader.

The living is a rectory, in the deanery of Stoke, valued in the taxation of Pope Nicholas, A.D. 1291, at £7. 6s. 8d., —not a bad living for those times; in the King's books, *temp.* Henry VIII., at £6. 11s. 3d.

In 1845 the Church was restored under the present rector and patron, the Rev. Richard Sparkes, B.A., Mr. Woodyer being the architect. At that time there was no N. aisle; there was a gallery at the west end and also a long cumbrous one along the S. side of nave, that quite blocked up the Church.

It appears that when the old theatre at Guildford was altered, I believe about 1818, some enterprising carpenter of these parts bought up a quantity of the woodwork of the seats, and with the permission of the rector erected this gallery and sold the pews to residents in the neighbourhood.

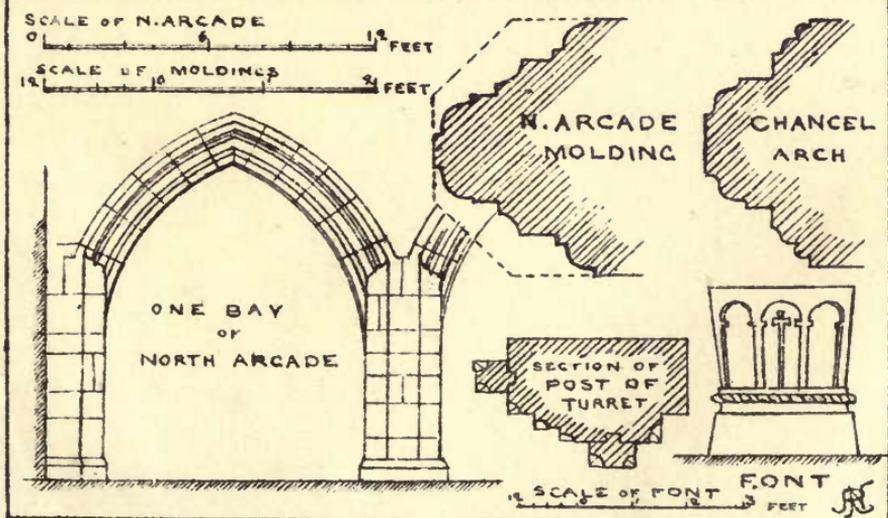
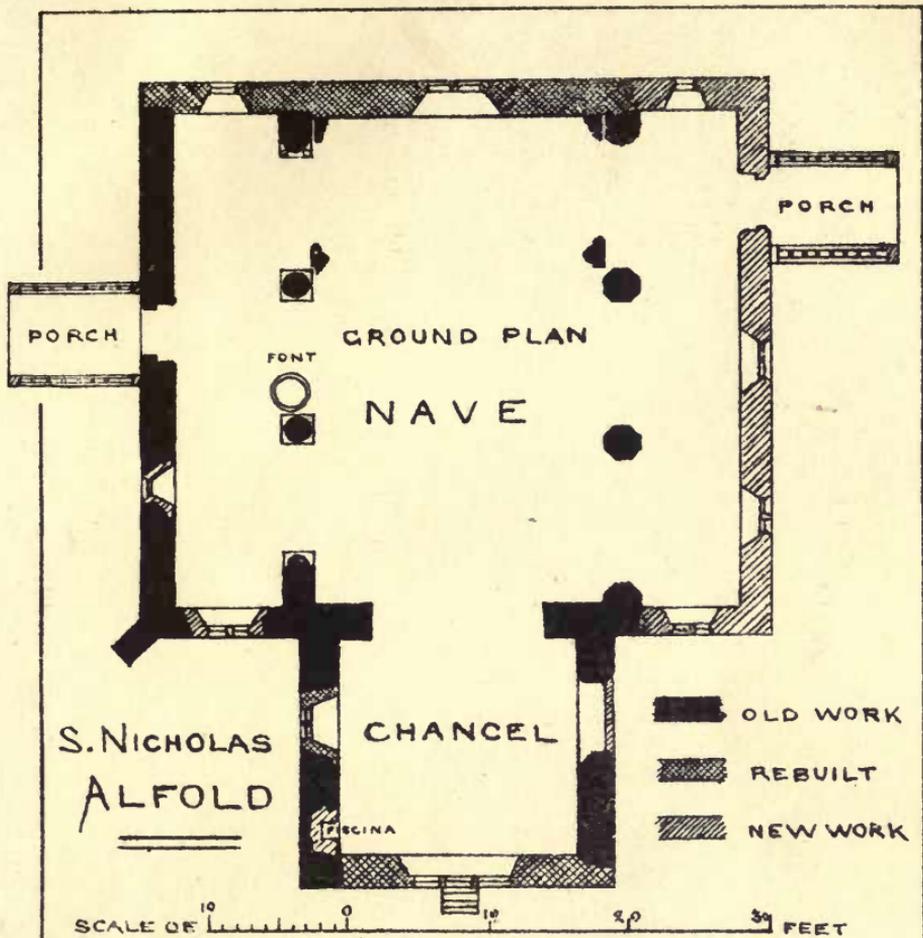
A reference to the plan will show the extent of new and old work. Of course every church that has been so thoroughly restored, though it doubtless gains in usefulness, necessarily loses much of its archæological interest, as one can never be sure what may not have disappeared. In this case, however, I think there is

nothing but praise due to the careful manner in which old work has been respected; it is unhappily not often that the archæologist can say as much.

There is no mention in Domesday Book of any church here; probably at that time the land was chiefly forest, the word Aldfold signifying "old fold," or enclosure for cattle. Dunsfold, Chiddingfold, Burningfold, Slinfold, Dimsfold are similar names in the neighbourhood. The name is spelt in various ways, a very common one being, as still commonly pronounced, "Awfold"; it is so spelt on the cover of a Bible used in the church, and dated 1818.

The earliest mention of a church is in the time of Henry III., in a charter of William Longespe, Earl of Salisbury, by which he gives the advowson of Aldfold, with the manor of Shalford, to John Fitz-Geffrey, who died in 1256. At the same time the same Fitz-Geffrey, who was son of Geoffrey Fitz-Piers Earl of Essex by a second marriage, became possessed of the manor of Shiere. He and his family played a prominent part in the history of the next fifty years, his grandson being co-leader with Simon de Montfort of the army of the Barons at the battle of Lewes. Their history and that of the succeeding patrons of Aldfold, all men of consequence, may be found in Manning and Bray, under the heading of the Manor of Shiere Vachery. It is curious to find such a small out-of-the-way place in this manner connected with many of the noblest families in England and most stirring events that have happened here. I feel, however, that as their history more properly belongs to that of the manors mentioned, I must resist the temptation to do more than allude to it. As there was a church here before the time of the Fitz-Geffreys, I should give the date of the oldest part, which is an early example of the Early English style, as about 1200. Of this date are the S. arcade, the font, and portions of the walls.

The sketch of the interior shows the character of these simple early arches; the abacus of the capital has, I should think, been pared down to its present form; it probably had originally some sort of necking mould.



The base of the respond at the W. end is different from those of the other columns, being moulded and having spurs at the angles. This work, all in chalk, is similar to the early work in Godalming and other churches in the neighbourhood.

The font has been scraped and renovated, I think unfortunately, as it is not part of the fabric and has nothing but its antiquity to recommend it.

From the Geffreys the estates and advowson passed to the Butlers, of whom James was created, in 1328, Earl of Ormond. He married a daughter of Humphrey de Bohun Earl of Hereford and Essex, High Constable of England, who had married a daughter of Edward I.; the family had therefore royal blood in their veins.

They were at this time residing chiefly on their Surrey estates. Lady Joan, grandmother of James, died at La Vacherie, her dower house, and Edmund, his father, had obtained grants for a fair at Shiere and other concessions. James, the second Earl of Ormond, presented to the living from about 1340 to 1380; he was living at Shiere in 1379, and left directions in his will that if he died in England he should be buried in Shiere Church: he died in Ireland in 1380. After this time the Butlers were chiefly occupied in Ireland, many members of the family having been successively viceroys. From the year 1304 the list of rectors is, with a few gaps, complete: it may be found in Manning and Bray.

In 1461, the 1st of Edward IV., James Earl of Ormond was attainted and beheaded, and his estates given to John Lord Audley, whose son James, having put himself at the head of the Cornish insurgents, was defeated at the battle of Blackheath, and put to death in 1497. The estates then passed to the famous Sir Reginald Bray, in whose family the advowson continued down to 1629, after which it passed through the hands of various owners, the chief of whom were the Strudwicks and Eliots, until it came into the possession of the present patron.

I should ascribe the part of the Church next in date to the Early English, to the time of the second earl, that is about 1360. Of this, the Decorated period, is the

N. arcade. At the time the Church was restored, no suspicion was entertained of the existence of these arches, as they were walled up and plastered over. During the progress of restoration, a workman employed in removing the whitewash from the walls laid bare part of the stone of one of the arches; the rector, who was exercising a commendable supervision, watching for any frescoes that might be uncovered, caused the investigations to be continued and the arches as now existing were ultimately laid bare. The proportions and mouldings of the arcade are in a simple way extremely good; the material is stone, and the work is similar to that in Rudgwick Church, in the adjoining county.

The chancel arch, which I should date only a few years later, is of chalk; I think it probable that the material of an arch of the earliest date was worked up anew, and that the jambs which are plain and square, are the identical jambs of the earlier arch.

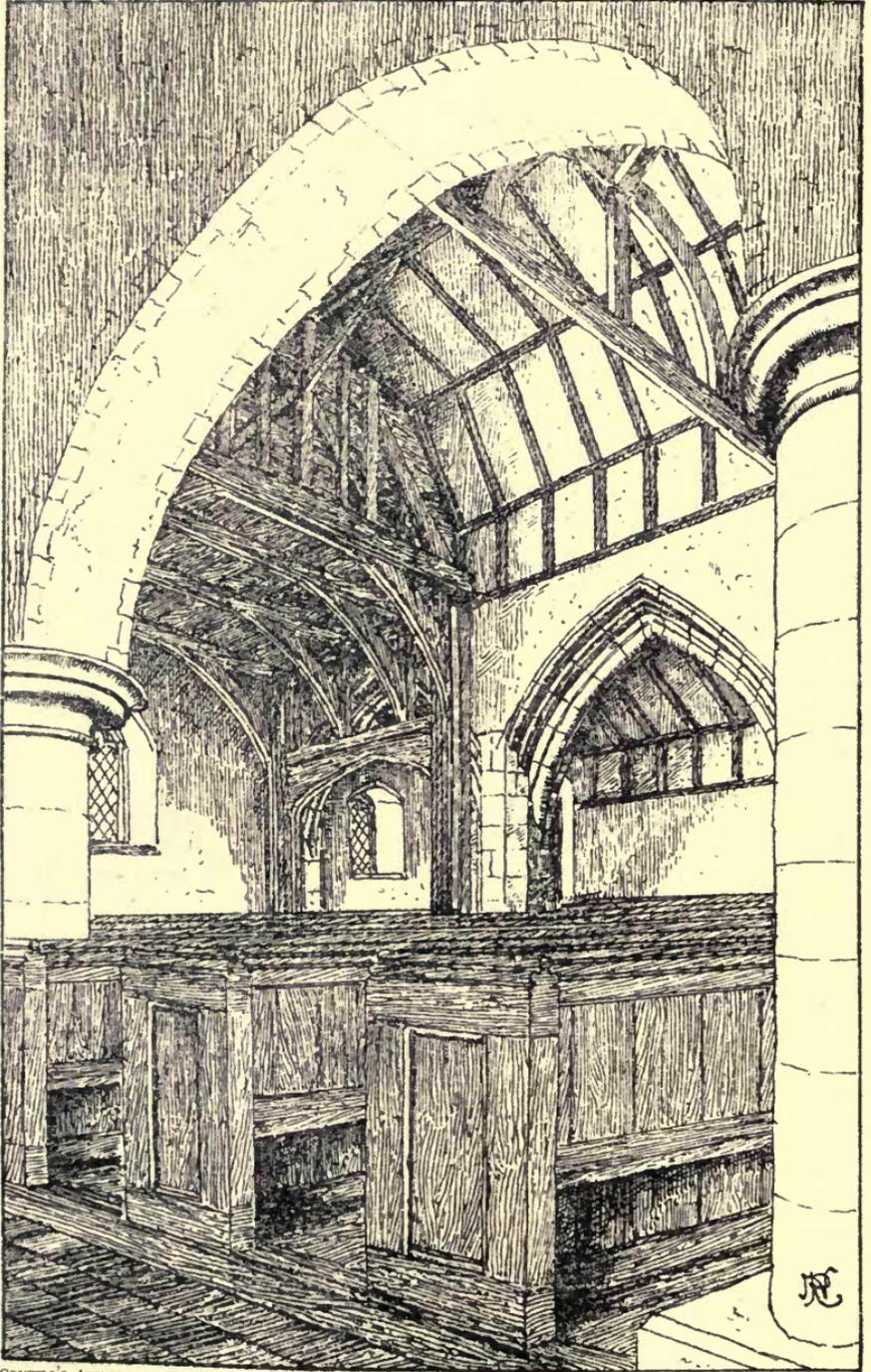
The mouldings being in a soft material, are rather more elaborate than those worked in the hard rough stone of the arcade.

Of this date were probably the doorways, porches, windows, and piscina, which have, however, all been restored.

The piscina is, I am told, a fac-simile of the original one; little trace of the windows, except the jambs, was left; the east window was entirely destroyed and the space filled up with a wooden one of the churchwarden order.

The wooden bell-turret, with its supports coming down inside the Church, is an interesting feature: a similar arrangement is occasionally to be found in all counties where timber is more abundant than stone. In Essex especially a great variety is to be found.

In this neighbourhood an example precisely similar in mouldings and construction, is to be seen at Thursley, though there the belfry stands in the middle bay of the nave, giving the church internally a cruciform appearance. At Thursley there is an arrangement of longitudinal struts from the ordinary tie-beams, as it were,



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forming buttresses to the belfry, that is not, partly perhaps owing to the different arrangement, found at Alfold. It is a development of a plan adopted at Elstead, the neighbouring parish. The belfry at Elstead is ruder and earlier, the construction being different: there is one like it at Dunsfold. Now the other work at Dunsfold is quite similar to that at Rudgwick; I should therefore conclude that the order of construction of the group was as follows:—Elstead, Dunsfold, Thursley or Rudgwick, and lastly Alfold.

The nave-roof is of the same date. There is a similar truss in the roof over the old inn at Chiddingfold, though there the king-post has a cap and base: it was a common form at this date.

Several of the seats and portions of the screen are of this period, probably about 1400. When the Church was restored, Mr. Woodyer found the beam of the old screen cut into lengths and used to support the boughs of the ancient yew in the churchyard. The new seats were made to pattern of the old, and the tiles now in the chancel were also made after the pattern of one found during the restoration.

The old woodwork used as a reredos has no connection with the Church.

The Perpendicular window in S. wall of chancel and the recess opposite are, I conclude from the history of the patrons, not more than fifty years later; though it is almost impossible in such simple work to fix an exact date.

This recess, the arch of which is of the shape called Tudor, extends through the wall, though the outside is now bricked up; there must therefore have been at one time a N. chapel, probably destroyed at the same time as the N. aisle. I think it probable the opening covered the slab of a tomb: there is one of an earlier date with brasses in a similar position at Witley. From the sides being on both inside and out unevenly splayed, it evidently also served as a squint or hagioscope for the N. aisle. There are two marks on one of the stones, of which I have said more in an appendix to this paper.

I may mention here, that on removing the whitewash, traces were found of a painting of the Crucifixion over the E. window, and of flower-pots with lilies and roses on the N. side of nave; these were so rude and fragmentary that it was deemed advisable to cover them up again.

I trust, however, the time is not far distant when the walls of our churches may be again, as they invariably were in olden time, radiant with glorious colour, and not, as now, finished in a mean and sordid style, that we should not for one moment tolerate in our dwelling-houses.

In the belfry are three bells, all by the Eldridge family; the oldest and largest has the inscription, "Brainus Eldridg me fecit, 1625"; the second, "B. E. 1631. Gloria deo in excelsis," the initials and usual motto of the same Brian Eldridge; and the third, "W. E. 1714," the initials standing for William Eldridge.

In the inventory of church goods taken in the reign of Edward VI. and published in vol. iv. of this Society's Collections, is the following entry:—

ALLFOLDE PARICHE CHURCHE.

<p>Imprimis iij belles hanginge in the stple waing xiiij c. Item the saunce bell. Item two small bells.</p>	<p>Item ij olde coope. Item ij albes of lockeram and ij surplussis. Item j aullter cloth.</p>
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All wiche is commyttid to the custody of George Steademan, John Hammon, Thomas Ireland, Robbart Jackeman, the vjth of October in the vjth year of the reign of owre Sovereign Lord.

<p>Item solde of the former invitorie j chalice of sillver waing viij ounces. Item sertyne rynges of sillver solde for vij^s the which money was bestowid in bowes and arrowes to serve the kinge. Item ij small belles ij candill-</p>	<p>stickes and the holly watter stocke solde for ij^s iiij^d. Item iij olde banner cloothis solld for iiij^d and distributid to the poore. Item in waxx solld amountinge to ij^s ix^d.</p>
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There is a small silver chalice belonging to the Church; it was found by the rector in a battered condition, and restored by him. The hall-marks show the date 1577.

There are no very ancient monuments, the oldest being 1670, to some of the Didelsfolds, a family of yeomen still holding a good deal of land in the neighbourhood. At the E. end of the churchyard is a much-worn slab of Sussex marble, which is said to cover the grave of the last of the glass-manufacturers. There was originally what many think to have been an illicit factory carried on in the heart of Sidney Wood, where many fragments of glass have been since found. Aubrey, in his History of Surrey, mentions the graves of the French glass-men here, and Evelyn says that his father brought some over after the massacres in France, and settled them on his estates in Sussex, where they remained for many generations.

The parish registers are of no great age; that of burials dates from 1658; of marriages, 1659; of baptisms, 1661. On the title-page are the following curious entries:—

———27. 1710 I gave a certificate to be touched for the Evil in these words: Surrey SS. These are to certify to whom it may concern that James (son of Henry) Napper bearer hereof is a legal inhabitant of our parish of Alfold in the county of Surrey aforesaid and is supposed to have the disease commonly called the [King's] Evil and hath desired this our certificate accordingly.

HENRY STRUDWICK, Rector.

The following is not signed.

2. May	}	1687	{	I gave certificates to Jane Puttock, Henry Manfield, Elizabeth Saker, to be touched for the Evil.
4 —				
19. July				

It would seem from the constant succession of patients, either that the first of those certified for were really cured by the sacred influence emanating from King James II., or else that they so enjoyed their trip to London that others were tempted to try the same remedy. The disease called by this name was scrofula, and up to 1719 the office for the ceremony of touching appears in our Liturgy, though the ceremony had, I believe, long before that time ceased to be a religious rite; the kings of the house of Brunswick have never attempted the cure.

In the churchyard stands an old yew-tree, probably

of pre-historic antiquity: it measures I believe 22 feet round at four feet from the ground, and is larger than the fine one at Dunsfold, though inferior to the almost unique tree at Hambledon. Close outside the churchyard are still to be seen the village stocks, and much that is curious and old-fashioned still survives in this out-of-the-way corner of the county.

The two manors of Markwick and Monkton Hook, formerly belonging to Waverley Abbey, were partly in this parish.

The manor of Alfold Park, dating from 1244, included among its possessors such names as Basset, Clifford, Gaynsford, Sir John Nevil, Sir Anthony Brown, &c. The house has been destroyed. The manor of Great Wildwood dates from 1391.

There is an old house standing in the village, known as Alfold House, that is a fair specimen of the smaller country houses of the beginning of the 16th century, or even earlier.

On a door in the upper story are the remains of some of the coloured decoration, of which traces also exist on the beams and other woodwork of the hall. It consists of a rude pattern of flowers and leaves, drawn with a broad black outline and filled in with colour.

It is so far interesting as tending to confirm what was doubtless the case, that the passion for exhibiting the natural grain of the wood is of comparatively modern date, and that our ancestors never hesitated to cover their oak with paint, providing it was in art form and they could afford it. It must be remembered, however, that their oak had not then the rich mellow colour that time has since given it.

Alfold was in the route of the smuggling trade that at one time was so extensively carried on in this part of the country. Many of the farmhouses are said to possess large hiding-places, where the smugglers stowed away their goods. It was usual for the farmers, about the time a visit was expected, to leave ample provisions for a party in these places, and in return they would find in the morning a keg or two of spirits.

In conclusion I must express my thanks for their kindness and courtesy in rendering me assistance in the preparation of this paper, to the rector, the Rev. Richard Sparkes, B.A., and to Mr. Woodyer, who was good enough to lend me the drawings made for the restoration of the Church. The drawings I have made will I hope give a sufficient idea of the character of the Church.

APPENDIX.

On a stone in the Perpendicular arch in N. side of chancel at Alfold are two curious marks, which I have shown on the accompanying illustration.

It is seldom that any old building, however humble it may be, fails to render, when carefully examined, some vestige of antiquity bearing upon the habits and customs of the times.

In collecting and recording such examples, archæological societies are doing especially useful service, by providing the materials which may sooner render possible a work, much to be desired, that shall, in explaining them, make us better acquainted with the minutiae and details not only of the religious rites and beliefs, but also of the domestic lives of our ancestors. With all such smaller details we are yet most imperfectly acquainted, and no true archæologist will underrate their value.

Unfortunately with every restoration or destruction such relics of the past become more scarce. While the actual architecture, often intrinsically worth nothing at all, is carefully retained at great inconvenience, other smaller mementoes, often of far more real importance, which might easily be saved, are contemptuously and ruthlessly destroyed, and what is worse, generally without any record of them being preserved.

It is to be hoped that when the proposed Museum of this Society is established, many objects now daily becoming more rare may be saved for our permanent instruction.

The signification and origin of the marks mentioned above have, as far I can learn, yet to be settled by

antiquarians. I do not intend to set up any theory of my own, but simply here to record their form and existence. Whether they are masons' marks or have a religious meaning, there is not yet sufficient evidence to prove.

Shown in the plate are also a variety of similar marks from Godalming Church. These are on the shafts of the columns on either side of the chancel, from three feet in height downwards. The centre shaft of S. aisle is especially rich in them, the commonest form being the simple cross formed by joining four dots.

I should think there were at least fifty such crosses on this one column alone; they are scattered about without any regard to order and are of all sizes, chiefly small.

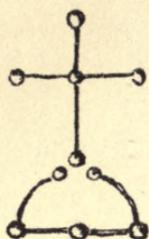
All drawings but that at the bottom corner represent the relative positions of the marks on the stones. They are mostly cut with mathematical precision, and were certainly not done by any but a practised hand. One of them evidently represents the ichthys, or sacred fish.

It is suggested that they may have been originally filled with coloured material, but I do not think it likely. Those at Godalming have been till recently covered with whitewash; I can find no present trace of colour, and no one would have been likely to pick out the colour from such a number.

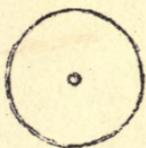
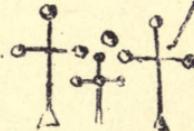
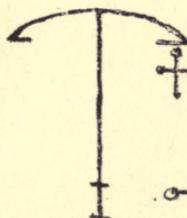
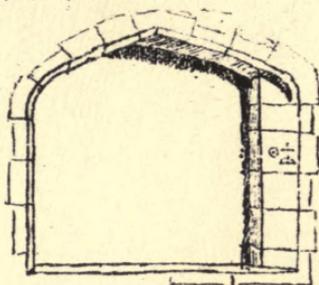
I should mention that at the time Major Heales, F.S.A., examined the Church, prior to writing his paper upon it, the columns were still covered with whitewash, as indeed the parts in the vestry still are: these marks were therefore not visible to him.

The material in both cases is chalk: very probably similar marks may be found in other chalk churches of the neighbourhood.

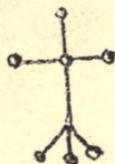
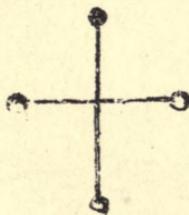
INCISED MARKS
ALFOLD



SKETCH showing
position of marks



INCISED MARKS
GODALMING
QUARTER FULL SIZE



J.P.